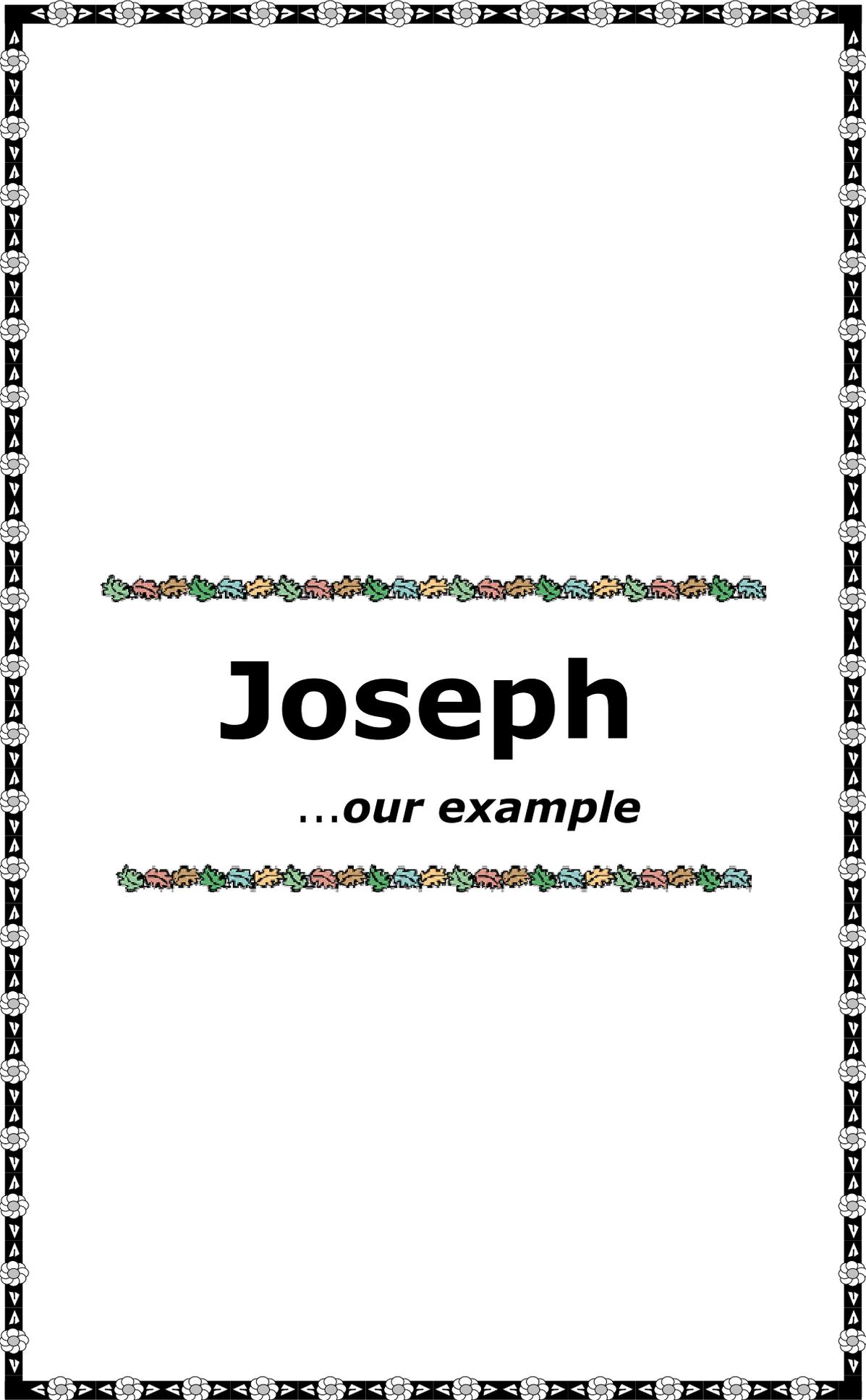


JOSEPH

...Our Role Model





Joseph

...our example





*"And we know that all things
work together for good to them
that love God, to them who are
the called according to his
purpose."*

- Romans 8:28

PREFACE

This book is about one of the old testament's wonderful character. And this character is "JOSEPH", who typifies both head and body of Christ! We have presented here the writings of Bro.Russell on Joseph, so that we may be benefited with the understanding of Joseph's life incidents and the lessons which those incidents provide! We strongly believe that through this work, we will learn about God's plan and divine character.

...“His faithfulness to God and his trust in God's Promise served as a rudder to guide and direct all the affairs of his life. Whatsoever he did was with a view to pleasing God and winning His approval” (R5216)...

...“Joseph's faith in the Lord was the basis of his strength of character, fidelity to duty and to principle” (R2887)...

...“How beautiful the revenge! Joseph heaped upon his brethren unasked forgiveness and expressions of sympathy” (R5234)...

...“Let us remember, in this connection, the words of our text, “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” (Rom12:21) Joseph exemplified this advice” (R2893)...

...“Never a murmur, never a word of repining, against the bitter lot that had been his! In every word, in everything, he testifies to God's Goodness, Wisdom, Love and Power” (R5234)...

...“Had Joseph been a saint of this Gospel age, begotten of the holy Spirit and illuminated thereby through the manifold revelations of the divine purpose and character as we have them in the Bible, his conduct would still be worthy of the very highest type of Christian development” (R3980)...

We hope that the above peculiar points may give us, who live at the end of this gospel age, as feet members of Christ--head and body--in our narrow way, an understanding about gods divine providence; a trust over it; a necessity to rely on it and prove to be a blessing. May God through this book guide us all in the footsteps of Jesus Christ and bless us.

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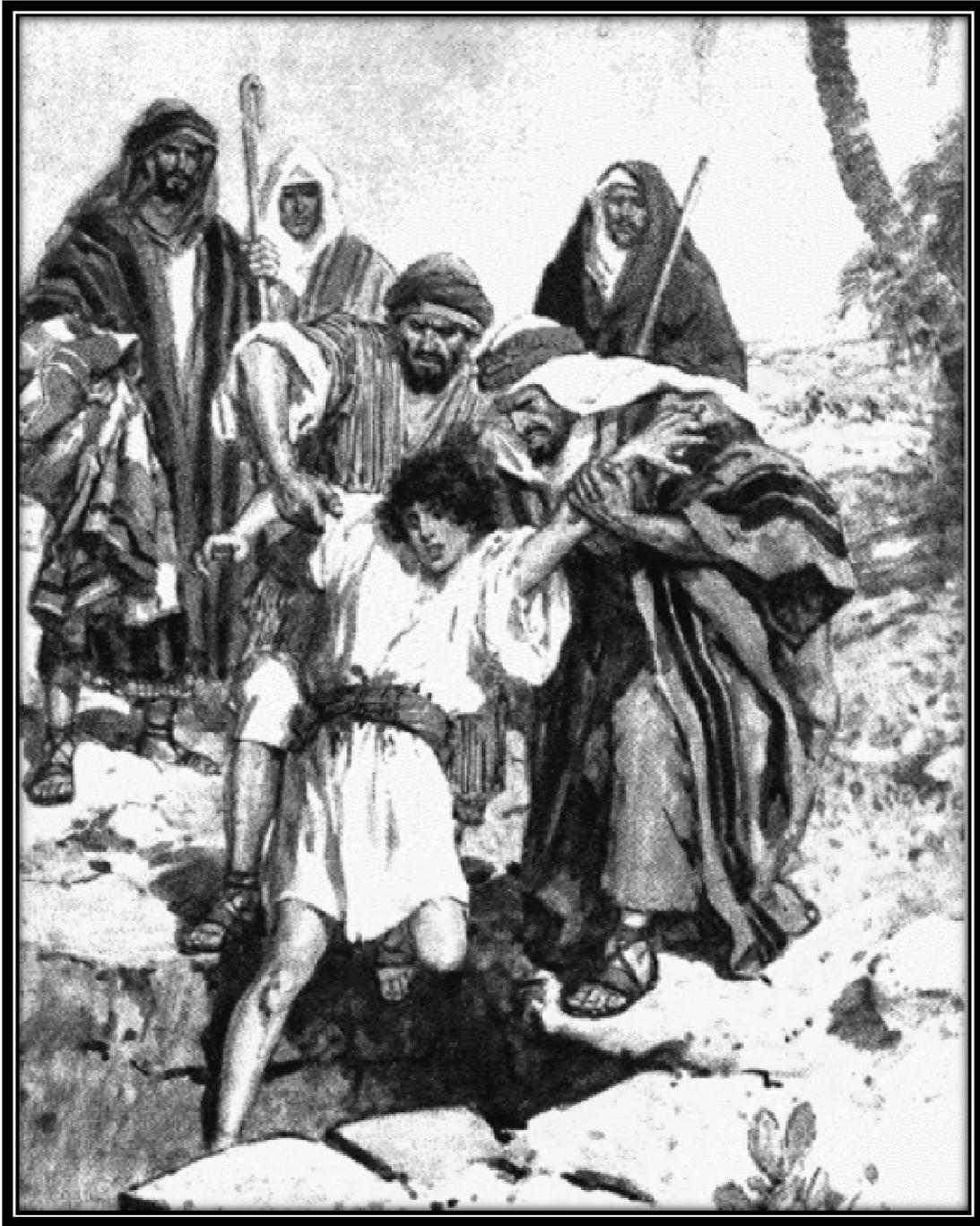
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PART - 1

IN THE SCHOOL OF ADVERSITY



"HATED OF HIS BRETHREN"
Genesis 37:5-28

"Where envying and strife are, there are confusion and every evil work."—Jas. 3:16

THE Bible story of Joseph is one of the most interesting known to literature in any age and in any language. The portion which belongs to this lesson might easily be termed a tragedy. It illustrates human nature good and bad, and in its various types and incidents furnishes valuable lessons, prominent among which is the oft-repeated one referred to in the Golden Text--that envy is one of the principal roots of human depravity--selfishness--and that from this root have sprung some of the most injurious influences and experiences known to man--"every evil work." As we study the present lesson let us have this thought in mind, and apply each to himself the moral. If in our fallen condition envy can produce such terrible fruitage, how much on guard against it every true follower of the Lord should be. How each should realize that to permit the growth of even the smallest shoot of this root in his daily life might lead on to most disastrous consequences to him as a New Creature.

Realizing this, each should be on guard for the extermination of this weed from the garden of his own heart. One writer has even said, "There is but one man who can believe himself free from envy, and it is he who has never examined his own heart." Undoubtedly this evil root of selfishness is to be found in every imperfect son and daughter of Adam, whether it is flourishing under favourable conditions or dormant for lack of them, or from the overmastering power of grace. Only the heart that is aflame with love for God supreme and for his neighbour as himself is in a condition so sterile as respects envy that the latter has no opportunity for development. With an abatement of our love for God and man comes a corresponding increase of favourable influence for the development of this root of envy and its concomitants of anger, hatred, strife and every evil work--yea, murder --all of which the Apostle tells us are works of the flesh and of the devil, and hence to be shunned by all those who now and by and by would have the Master's approval. Whatever may have been the natural tendency of our flesh, the new nature begotten of the holy Spirit of the Lord, the spirit of love, is expected by the Father to dominate and render sterile to envy all whom he recognizes as children of God. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (Mathew 5:9).

JOSEPH, THE BELOVED SON

At the time of our lesson Joseph was about seventeen years old, next to the youngest of Jacob's twelve sons, and his father's favourite. He was the son of the gentle Rachel, the specially loved wife of Jacob. Evidently he partook in large measure of his mother's gentleness as well as of his father's courage and faith, as all of his subsequent history shows. His elder brothers were of coarser type, so that all the circumstances and conditions justified Jacob in having a preference for Joseph, in considering him his specially beloved son. His father procured for him what in the common version is called a coat of many colours, and in the revised version a coat of extremes. It is presumed that the extremes were not of colours but of lengths--that the coat was long and had long sleeves, thus differing from the ordinary coats of the working people and corresponding to the style worn by the aristocratic. It is suggested, however, that the coat may have been of many colours, because upon some

of the ancient monuments of Egypt such long coats are pictured as having been made of material of bright colours joined together in a kind of patchwork; thus it is possible that both translations are correct.

In any case the coat was a distinct one, and, in conjunction with Jacob's acknowledged preference for Joseph, it helped to fix the jealousy and bitterness of his brethren, who in it saw the suggestion that in their father's opinion Joseph would eventually be a ruler amongst his brethren --his father's successor as the chief of the household, the tribe. We need not here stop specially to criticize the unwisdom on the part of the father in manifesting so pronounced a favouritism. We can, however, realize that Joseph had such peculiarities as justified favouritism and special love. In this, as well as in many other respects, the Scriptures clearly indicate that Joseph was a type of Jesus. The latter was the heavenly Father's beloved Son, and he similarly was rejected by his brethren, he similarly was sold for silver, he similarly was delivered, we are told, for envy. (Matt. 27:18; Mark 15:10.) More than this, Joseph typified the entire body of Christ, every member of which is to some extent represented in his experiences--to every member of which our Lord's words apply, "The Father himself loveth you." --John 16:27.

THE VALUE OF DREAMS

Certain dreams which Joseph had and which evidently were in some manner inspired by the Lord, and prophetic, tended to further embitter his brethren, serving to fertilize the root of bitterness and envy which was in their hearts. One of these dreams represented a wheat-field in which were twelve sheaves, one of which arose and stood upright while the others fell before it, as though doing homage. Joseph, without evil thought, apparently, told the dream to his brethren, and they, lacking faith in the Lord and submission to the divine will, were angered by the very suggestion that their younger brother should ever be their superior-- "And they hated him the more for his dreams and for his words." The words referred to Joseph's report of misconduct on the part of some of his brethren. Righteousness, justice, seems to have been an integral part of Joseph's natural character, and his report of his brethren was not a slander but merely what he considered to be proper, that his father should know the manner in which his business was conducted (Genesis 37:2).

Another of Joseph's dreams enkindled the anger of his brethren, and even drew a protest from his father, as though Joseph's ambitions were the groundwork of his dreams. Nevertheless, Jacob pondered these things in his heart, and doubtless wondered how great his favourite boy might someday be. This second dream pictured the sun, the moon and the stars bowing to one star, and was interpreted to mean that the whole family would someday acknowledge Joseph as their superior. How preposterous this must have seemed to them all, including Joseph. Poor boy! His subsequent lessons in life doubtless taught him to be more secretive, not to tell every dream and hope, not to cast his pearls to those who could not appreciate them, but who would be angered thereby. How necessary to us all is the lesson of wisdom along the lines of secretiveness. Our Lord illustrates this, saying, "I have many things to tell you, but ye cannot bear them now." There is a time to tell and a time to refrain--we all need to watch and to pray, "Set a guard, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."--Psa. 141:3.

GOD'S WORD SUPERIOR TO DREAMS

With the Scriptural record of inspired dreams before us it would be folly to denounce them and to declare them unworthy of any consideration. We remember the

other miraculous dreams that Joseph interpreted, also Jacob's, Peter's, Paul's, etc. On the other hand we need to guard ourselves lest dreams should be given undue importance. We are to remember that there was an appropriate necessity for dreams in the olden times which does not exist at the present time; because the Gospel Church is expected to walk by faith and not by sight--is expected to listen to the voice behind them saying, "This is the way," rather than to expect a miracle or a dream to indicate the path of righteousness. The path beyond us is shown by the divine Word, and we are to cultivate the ears of our hearts that we may have the proper direction. In harmony with this the Scriptures say, "He that hath a dream let him tell a dream, but he that hath my Word let him speak my Word." (Jer. 23:28` .) Here the Lord indicates that a dream might be told if we have nothing better to tell--nothing more direct, nothing more authoritative; but that the Lord's Word, his revelation, his inspired testimony is to be put far above all dreams of our own and of others. If a dream, therefore, corroborates some plain statement of the Word of God it may be used and appreciated in the same sense that we use and appreciate a type--not to teach a doctrine or duty, but to illustrate and call attention to the statements.

COME, LET US KILL HIM

Joseph's faithfulness in reporting facts led Jacob to make him a kind of overseer, and it was probably in this capacity that he was again sent to his brethren to Shechem, a three days' journey--to carry to them some home delicacies and to bring word again to Jacob of the general conditions prevailing, the prosperity of the flocks, condition of the pasturage, etc. Not finding his brethren at Shechem Joseph followed directions to Dothan, manifesting in the whole procedure a considerable degree of courage and self-reliance, sleeping outdoors at night as was the custom of the time and braving the dangers of the way. This shows us, too, that Jacob's love for his favourite son did not lead him to spoil him entirely, and that the boy himself was recognized as one who could be trusted in a general way to care for himself. Many parents today are less wise, and fail to cultivate courage, determination, etc., in the children they favour--sometimes shielding them from difficulties in a manner which proves ultimately very prejudicial to their interests.

The brethren as shepherds were accustomed to keep a sharp look-out for wild beasts likely to injure the flock, and discerned their brother at a distance. Forthwith the circumstances and conditions tended to a rapid germination of their root of envy and bitterness, and in a few moments had sprouted and brought forth in their hearts the spirit of murder. Nine of the ten at once agreed to kill their brother. The only one to object, and he covertly, was Reuben, who knew too well the bitterness of his brethren to venture to oppose them, and as a counter suggestion he urged that they do not murder him but put him into one of the dry cisterns of those parts, intending in his heart to subsequently return and secretly deliver his brother.

In these brethren we see illustrated the heart of the natural man, which might at one moment fight for justice and shortly thereafter violate every principle of justice. Was it not these same men who now, in violation of all brotherly love, were planning their brother's murder, who only a short time before had avenged the dishonour of their sister by slaying the population of a whole village--in what they considered a righteous indignation against sin? The transforming influence of the holy Spirit is necessary to correct these violent extremes of the fallen flesh; hence the Scriptures tell us that those who are begotten again of the holy Spirit alone have the "spirit of a sound mind." (2 Tim. 1:7` .) Truly in the natural man pride is an important factor, and often leads to murders and lynching's, ostensibly in the defence of righteousness--

really in the gratification of an element of selfishness. It was then similarly pride, one of the roots of selfishness, that led to that wholesale murdering; and it was envy, another root of selfishness, which now led them to attempt to murder their brother.

STRONG CRYINGS AND TEARS

Reuben's plea was effective. Joseph was put into a pit and the brethren sat down to eat bread, doubtless consuming some of the very delicacies that Joseph had brought to them from home, while the poor boy's cries and entreaties and appeals rang in their ears. They were stony-hearted, unmerciful, as well as unjust: and indeed the natural heart is usually unmerciful. Mercy is often extended through shame or fear or policy amongst worldly people, but mercy in itself is an element of love which, although it originally belonged to human nature, has very generally been lost, and is principally an evidence amongst those who have been begotten again in heart-likeness to their Lord.

Our lesson does not mention the cries and entreaties and pleadings of the imprisoned Joseph, but another Scripture does when later these same brethren were forced by the famine in Canaan to go to Egypt to buy wheat. Their brother Joseph was governor there, and he, affecting to consider them spies, put them in jail three days. It was while they were there that their minds were more or less awakened to the wrong doings of previous years, and they said one to another, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." Reuben's reply to them was, "Spoke I not unto you saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? Therefore, behold, also his blood is required." Apparently Reuben departed from that vicinity after Joseph was imprisoned, intending to return later for his deliverance, but upon his return he found that his brethren had sold him to a company of merchantmen who had taken him as a slave into Egypt.

R3972

PATIENT ENDURANCE IN ADVERSITY **GENESIS 39:20-23; 40:1-15**

Golden Text:--"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."—Rev. 2:10

THE story of Joseph's trials and difficulties is a most pathetic one: yet we see that in all these things the blessing of the Lord was with him, and he, faithfully responding, his experiences, instead of doing him injury, were on the contrary greatly to his advantage. Although Joseph lived long before the Pentecostal blessing as we experience it--long before the bringing to light of the exceeding great and precious promises of the heavenly nature and Kingdom glories and invitation to the elect to share therein--though Joseph had only the indefinite revelation of God's mercy contained in the great Oath-Bound Covenant given to Abraham, nevertheless his faithfulness and patient endurance constitute a wonderful lesson to the household of the Spirit-begotten sons of God of this Gospel age. If he could endure so patiently and so faithfully, what should not we, so much more highly favoured, be able to endure? The secret of his success and ours is the same, namely, a fast hold by faith to the Abrahamic Covenant, which, as the Apostle says, we have as an anchor to our souls,

sure and steadfast, entering into that which is beyond the veil. (Heb. 6:19.) The consideration of this lesson should nerve, energize, every one of the Lord's consecrated people to still further endurance and faithfulness under the circumstances and conditions that the Lord's providence may mark out for them.

JOSEPH A SLAVE IN EGYPT

The Ishmaelitic traders, to whom Joseph's brethren sold him for twenty pieces of silver, took him to Egypt, where he was exposed for sale in the open market, as was the custom of the time. We can well imagine the anguish of the poor boy. Delivered from the pit in which his brethren had put him to die he soon realized that they had not repented at heart, but merely changed the form of their murderous envy. Passing not many miles distant from his father's abode the dejection of the boy of seventeen can be better imagined than described, and arriving in the Egyptian metropolis, the centre of civilization at that time, and beholding there wonderful things entirely new to him as a shepherd's son, his heart must have been full of suspense and wonder as to who would purchase him and what would be his future lot in life. There was plenty of room in all of these experiences he had recently passed through for him to lose faith in God--to wonder why he should be left to the mercy of his pitiless brethren, why he should be allowed to become a slave, separated from his father's home. Yet we have no intimation that his faith forsook him.

In the Lord's providence he was purchased by a wealthy official of Egypt named Potiphar. As a servant in this man's house he was faithful to his duties small and great, and grew in his master's confidence and esteem until, at the age of twenty-two, he was made manager of his entire estate. When twenty-seven years of age--ten years after coming to Egypt, in the prime of young manhood, he unwittingly attracted to himself the love of his master's wife, but when it manifested itself he persistently resisted it on the lofty grounds of faithfulness to God and faithfulness to his master. Dr. Blakie pointedly remarks of this!

TRIAL OF JOSEPH'S VIRTUE

We may believe that it was no ordinary temptation when, day after day, the mistress of the house, expert in amorous arts, came to spread the net, with every allurement which her skill and her passion could devise. We may conceive how even Joseph might be moved by the thought that, slave as he was, he had attracted the admiration of a woman of such rank, and how the vision might flit before him that through her influence he might recover his liberty and in a bright career realize his dreams after all.

The conduct of Potiphar's wife well illustrates how love may be changed to bitterest hate. In her determination she grasped Joseph by the coat, but he slipped out of it, and then her rage and resentment became bitter. She kept the coat and told her husband that his favourite servant had endeavoured to entice her to do evil, and that when she made outcry he fled, leaving his coat in her possession. What a turn this was in Joseph's affairs! Why should the Lord permit him to be thus scandalized, not only in the eyes of his master, but amongst all those with whom he had formed an acquaintance in the ten years of his residence there? Why should the Lord permit his virtue to be so evil spoken of?

This probably seemed to Joseph a mysterious providence, yet in the light of the subsequent story we can see how the Lord's providence had not forsaken him, but was ready to make even this experience work out to his further instruction in

righteousness, patience, experience, faithfulness, and to prepare him for still greater blessings by and by--on the throne. The lesson for us of this spirit dispensation is most evident and most striking: as it was not because of Joseph's unfaithfulness that the Lord permitted this trial to come upon him, so it does not speak unfaithfulness on our part and retribution from the Lord if trials and difficulties may be permitted to come upon us. Are we not learning every day more and more to trust the Lord where we cannot trace him in his providences, when we cannot see the end of the way? If we could see the end would it be faith at all? Is it not our lack of knowledge of the future that constitutes the very virtue of faith in the present time?

ABANDON US NOT IN TEMPTATION

The great Spurgeon once remarked, "In contending with certain sins there remains no mode of victory but by flight. The ancient naturalists wrote much of basilisks, whose eyes fascinated their victims and rendered them easy victims; so the moral gaze of wickedness puts us in solemn danger." In harmony with this thought the Apostle wrote to Timothy, "Flee youthful lusts." (2 Tim. 2:22.) Jesus' example in this matter is a wonderful lesson to us all respecting loyalty to the principles of righteousness even to the extent of hazarding the brightest hopes and prospects of an earthly kind. And if we may well copy this lesson of fleeing from temptation, we may also note with the Prophet another lesson in this connection, for when Joseph's master Potiphar was very angry with him, so far as the evidence shows, Joseph contented himself with merely denying the allegation without attempting to demean Potiphar's wife by relating the facts of the case. What a noble example is here given us of avoiding evil speaking, even when that would be the truth!

Joseph's noble heart probably reasoned that while it would have been no more than justice to have revealed the wickedness of the woman, such a course would not only have damaged the wife but have dealt an irreparable blow to Potiphar's affection for her, thus destroying his master's confidence and breaking up his home. Willingness to endure under such conditions is a marvellous illustration of high and noble integrity --character. Such a man was indeed fit for a throne-- but not yet; God had other experiences for him before he would be ready for the exaltation intended. So with us: God has called us to the throne of the Millennial Kingdom to be associated with our Lord and Redeemer in his great work; but first we must be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, and trials and buffetings and testing's of patient endurance are essential to the development of such character as the Lord seeks.

THE STRENGTHENING OF CHARACTER

A lump of rock candy is pure carbon and a diamond is pure carbon, yet there is a difference between them which consists mainly in the fact that the diamond has been crystallized to an extreme degree of hardness, firmness, solidity. So there is a difference between the states and conditions of the New Creatures in Christ. At one time we are mere "babes in Christ," but if faithful through patient endurance and the Lord's instructions and disciplines of providence we are to become strong in the Lord and in the power of his might--the "babe in Christ" corresponds then to the pure carbon in the form of rock candy, while the mature Christian, developed in the furnace of affliction, etc., corresponds to the diamond. We remember in this connection the Lord's assurance that at the close of our trial time in the end of the Gospel age, at his second coming, he will make up his "jewels."

At that time undoubtedly an official of Potiphar's rank would have been permitted to kill his slave under such a charge, and the fact that, instead, Joseph was imprisoned, may therefore be taken as an intimation that Potiphar was not fully convinced of the treachery of the man who had served him faithfully for ten years. But a prison in olden times differed greatly from a modern prison in civilized lands. Joseph, in mentioning the prison, "dungeon" (v. 15) in the Hebrew calls it a "hole," and a minister familiar with oriental prisons of today says:--

"We have visited many a prison in the Levant; we have seen...intolerable filth and want of ventilation, the excess of vermin, the unmerciful stocks in which the feet are made fast. We may well pity virtuous Joseph, who was indeed, as claimed by tradition, put into the prison dungeon of the present city of Cairo, which is composed of dark, loathsome and pestilential passages where the prisoners are chained to the wall." Joseph's experiences in prison are referred to by the Psalmist (Psa. 105:18), saying, "Whose feet they hurt with fetters; he was laid in irons."

What was the effect of this new experience upon Joseph? Was he discouraged, cast down, embittered in soul? Did he say to himself or to others, If this be the reward of virtue, give me vice? Did he repine against the Lord's providences in permitting this experience, or was he patiently submissive, trustful? Joseph was in all these experiences the most wonderful, model example of the proper course of a true Christian and saint. And again we suggest that if he could be faithful with as little light as he enjoyed respecting the Lord's permission of this evil, what might not the Lord reasonably expect of us who have been blest with so much greater light and instruction, and with the noble example of Joseph and scores of others in the Scriptures and in our own experiences--what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy living and godliness and faith in God?

For very shame's sake we should strive at least to come up to the standard of Joseph--we who have the exceeding great and precious promises--we who have the explanation of why our trials and difficulties are permitted and how they are to prepare us for the Kingdom and its glorious work. Can we not readily see how Joseph's trials and difficulties developed character in him? and how, as he overcame in one instance after another, he was becoming stronger--his character was crystallizing? Ah! no wonder he will be amongst the "ancient worthies" who, in the future, after the glorification of the Church, will be made princes in all the earth for the ruling and blessing and uplifting of the entire human family, under the guidance and direction of the Christ, Head and body. Most evidently the Lord knows how, not only to select the wonderful characters for his service, but also to develop these characters and prove and test them, and make them strong for his service and their blessing.

THE LORD WAS WITH HIM

Joseph's experience in the stocks was a limited one. Evidently the prison-keeper discerned that he had a prisoner of no ordinary character and ability, whatever might be charged against him. His reverence for the Lord and his faithfulness to duty made him a marked man, and the keeper of the prison was glad to give over one responsibility after another into Joseph's hands. According to the story, Joseph's own experiences made him tender hearted toward the other prisoners, whose degradations and sorrows he was enabled to enter into by reason of his own experiences. He was learning noble lessons, which would fit and prepare him for higher usefulness as the governor of Egypt. The secret of the whole matter is told in the lesson in a few words, "The Lord was with him, and that which he did the Lord made to prosper."

Whoever has reverence for the Lord in any degree will be proportionately blessed: much faith, much reverence, much obedience will surely lead to much blessing in heart and life--to much supporting and steadying of character, whatever it may have been by nature --to much of the spirit of a sound mind, however erratic the person may have been naturally to begin with. In all these respects we who have the instructions of the Lord's Word or the encouragement of his promises and the guidance of the spirit of a sound mind are greatly blessed. In proportion as we make use of them and develop the proper character we shall have the ultimate reward and hear the Master's voice, saying, It is enough, come up higher. Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

We should never forget, as "New Creatures in Christ Jesus," the exhortation of the Golden Text to faithfulness--to the Lord (which includes faithfulness to the brethren, to the truth, to righteousness in every sense of the word). This faithfulness must be tried, tested, proven, clear down to the end of life's journey --until we go into the prison-house of death. "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life." The Lord whom we serve is able and willing to open the prison-doors and bring us forth in the First Resurrection to a share in the glory, honour and immortality of his own Kingdom. Hallelujah, what a Saviour! what a salvation! and for what a peculiar people these are intended! Such thoughts incite us--as was the divine intention--to strive to make our calling and election sure.

PROSPERING IN PRISON

Well might the chief jailor be content to leave the care of the prison in Joseph's hands. We may well imagine the cleaning up of the dungeon effected under his direction, and that a measure of peace would reign within those dark walls quite in contrast with the bedlam that had previously prevailed. Wisdom, mercy, gentleness, patience, were all, we may be sure, needed and exercised; and the model prison not only effected a blessing upon those who were incarcerated, but brought a blessing also to Joseph in his own heart-development, and additionally in that our own joy and peace are always ministered to when we endeavour to solace the woes of others.

A picture of how Joseph dealt with the prisoners is given in the lesson: instead of treating them rudely and roughly, he looked after their interests to such an extent that he noticed one morning that two of the prisoners were of peculiarly sad countenance, and he tenderly inquired, "Wherefore look ye so sadly today?" They had dreamed, and they were in trouble lest their dreams boded further adversity. Joseph said unto them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me them, I pray you." How evidently the secret of Joseph's faithfulness and strength of character lay in the fact that he had faith in God--that he believed in the great Oath-Bound Covenant that God had made with his great-grandfather Abraham, confirmed to his grandfather Isaac, and again to his father Jacob, and of which he was an heir. What a power faith has in life to hold it steady in every storm and cloudy trouble!

One of the dreams bore a most favourable interpretation, and Joseph requested the one who would so shortly be set at liberty and restored to the king's favour that he would remember him and his kind attentions to him while in the prison, and speak a good word to the king on his behalf, that he might be relieved from the dungeon. And in explaining the matter let us not overlook the fact that he neither incriminated his brethren nor Potiphar's wife, but merely said as an excuse for his being in prison, "For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also have I done

nothing that they should put me into the dungeon." It was not necessary that he should speak evil of any in order to plead his case, and he abstained. What an evidence we here have that our race 3,000 years ago were neither monkeys nor savages. On the contrary, this natural man, not begotten of the holy Spirit (which did not come upon any until the Gospel dispensation--Pentecost), had such a marvellous development of generosity, love, that he seems not even to have been severely tempted along the lines of evil speaking--and that without any instruction, either oral or written.

How this story should shame many who have named the name of Christ and have professed to turn their backs upon sin and every evil work and who well know that evil speaking is closely related to the works of the flesh and of the devil. Joseph had not the instructions of our Lord and the apostles to the effect that love is the principal thing, that love thinketh no evil, suffereth long and is kind, is not easily provoked, etc.; and that this love is not only appropriate amongst the Lord's people, who should love one another as he has loved us, but must be extended also to our neighbors, that we may love our neighbors as ourselves-- yea, beyond this, to our enemies, who are to be fed and clothed by us if they need our assistance. Thank God for the lesson of Joseph--enduring affliction, yet full of faith, mercy, gentleness, patience, kindness. How evidently the mind had to do with all this character-development. Without the hopes set before him in the Abrahamic promise, Joseph might have been as dispirited and characterless as the majority of mankind. Remember, too, that it is the same promise that we are heirs to, as the Apostle declares--Christ is the heir, and if we be Christ's then are we Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.--`Gal. 3:16,29`.

R2880

**"HATED WITHOUT A CAUSE"
GEN. 37:12-36**

Golden Text: "The patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him."--Acts 7:9

RACHEL, the dearly beloved wife of Jacob, was dead, but her first-born son, Joseph, was beloved by his father above his ten older half-brothers. And from the narrative it is not unreasonable to assume that this love was not merely on his mother's account, but that Joseph himself had a kindness and nobility of character which specially commended him to his father, and drew forth his affection. As a son of his old age, Jacob was inclined to favour Joseph in various ways, and amongst others procured for him an expensive robe, of a kind peculiar to that time, samples of which have recently been found in Egypt, in the tomb of Beni-Hassan,-- "long, richly embroidered robes in various patterns and colours, which seem to have been produced by sewing together small pieces of different colours. Herodotus describes one sent as a present by the king of Egypt, which 'had a vast number of figures of animals interwoven into its fabric, and was embroidered with gold.'"

Jacob probably did not realize to what extent his partiality was cultivating in his other sons a feeling of enmity and envy against Joseph; and, indeed, we may question if it would have been to Joseph's advantage, as respects development of character, to have remained at home under such conditions; he would probably have been a spoiled young man, just as grandparents are very apt to spoil grandchildren by

too much petting and partiality, developing in the favoured child a spirit of pride, to plague and injure it for the remainder of life.

The envy of his brothers over his father's partiality was intensified by two dreams which Joseph had, and which he told them of, apparently with all simplicity and innocence. In the one dream he saw twelve sheaves in the field, one for each of the sons of Jacob, and the other eleven sheaves bowed down to his sheaf. In the other dream he saw the sun, moon, and eleven stars bow down to him. His brothers were incensed at any thought of his ultimate superiority to them, who were his elders; and even his father repudiated the thought that the dream could have any meaning, since it would imply that Joseph would be greater than his parents, as well as greater than his brethren. We are not to account for these dreams as the work of the boy's imagination and ambition, although such may be the case in respect to many dreams; rather we are to understand that those dreams were prophetic: that God was foretelling, foreshadowing the future--to the intent that Jacob and Joseph and his brethren might all eventually discern that the Lord's hand was connected with all the peculiar circumstances of his life;--that God foreknew and overruled them in the manner in which they ultimately resulted. This fore statement would make the lessons many times more weighty, when they would be understood, just as prophetic declarations respecting our Lord and his experience, are the more convincing on this account. The dreams were fulfilled later on, when Jacob and his family presented themselves before Joseph, a prince in Egypt, and made obeisance to him as to a king.

Well does the Apostle class envy as one of the works of the flesh and the devil. (Gal. 5:19-21.) It is a seed which thrives rapidly in any heart where it takes root, and who can tell what bitter fruitage it will produce? So rank had been its growth in the hearts of Joseph's brethren that when he came to them in the field at Dothan with a message from his father, their envy overflowed all bounds, and they premeditated murder. Subsequently, at the instance of Reuben, one of their number, his life was spared, and he was merely put into a pit, a dry cistern, to die of starvation; Reuben, however, premeditating his deliverance. Subsequently, at the instance of his brother Judah, his life was spared from the pit, and he was sold to some travelling merchants as a slave for the Egyptian market, where shortly afterward he was installed as a servant in the house of Potiphar. How hard must have been the hearts of these brethren, and how sore and affrighted the heart of Joseph, the favoured child of his father! The narrative tells us nothing respecting his tears, his entreaties, and the refusal of his brethren, but an account of this is given us elsewhere (Gen. 42:21), for the guilty brethren, when in trouble themselves, exclaimed, "We saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us."

Whoever finds envy, hatred or malice in his heart in any degree should know that he is harbouring an enemy; a spirit which, under certain circumstances, might quickly develop into a spirit of murder. The Apostle, therefore, urges all who have become new creatures in Christ Jesus to mortify, to kill, to bury, to put away, the spirit of evil, of hatred, of strife, of envy, and through the transforming influence of the Lord's spirit to put on more and more, day by day, the spirit of love, the spirit of Christ. We can see a lesson in the experience of Joseph's brethren; and even tho envy never led us thus far, it should be an illustration to us of its tendency, and we should hate it and proportionately eradicate it from our hearts.

The chief point of this lesson is its illustration of divine providence. It reminds the children of God of this Gospel dispensation of the promise of the Lord's word, that "all things shall work together for good to those who love God." It teaches us how

implicitly we may rely upon divine power and wisdom and love, even when all things seem to be against us; and also how futile are all the powers of our enemies to do us real injury if God be for us. (Rom. 8:31.) Apparently the spirit of murder was in the nine brethren, and apparently had the Lord not so led the matter about, some of them would have killed Joseph quickly. But we are not to suppose that it was the only way God could have adopted for bringing Joseph into Egypt, and ultimately (Gen. 41:40) to its throne, to be the life-giver (bread-provider) for the Egyptians in their famine, and also for the Israelites, and thus to lead on to the captivity of the whole nation of Israel in Egypt, and to their discipline and education in the arts known to the Egyptians, and ultimately to cause their deliverance, as he did. We are to remember that the All-mighty is All-wise as well as All-powerful, and that he could have selected any of many ways to accomplish his purpose. The lesson illustrates, however, God's wisdom, by which he is able, not only to circumvent the machinations of evil men, but also to use their evil deeds to serve his purposes, to carry out his designs, and to bless those whom he is leading. Would that all of God's consecrated people, spiritual Israelites indeed, might obtain a great impetus to faith from this lesson, and henceforth rely more strongly and fully than ever upon the Lord and the power of his might. What a peace, what a joy, what a comfort it brings, to be able by faith to realize that the Lord is at the helm in respect to all of our interests and affairs, temporal and spiritual!

Those who can plan murder, and who are full of envy, malice and hatred, will not hesitate to support their evil way by fraud, deception, lying. And so it was with the ten brethren. They took the coat of many colours, they draggled it in blood, and sent it to their father Jacob, probably at the hands of a messenger. Never doubting them, Jacob assented at once to the proposition that his beloved son had been cruelly devoured by a wild beast, and he mourned his loss, apparently for years;--his other sons vainly endeavouring to comfort him, and, no doubt, suffering to some extent anguish on account of their deeds. Perhaps this experience with evil was beneficial ultimately both to Jacob and his sons. Indeed, the subsequent narrative seems to imply this. And there is a lesson here for us, to the effect that those who yield to evil influences may subsequently learn valuable lessons there from, and that we may entertain hope for their recovery to righteousness. This is a part of our hope respecting the world in the coming Millennial age--that present experiences with sin, envy, hatred and strife will prove valuable to them by and by, when they shall have experienced some of the retributions and have learned a more excellent way, under the judgments of that time.

As Joseph was hated by his brethren, and that without a cause, and figuratively killed, when sent to them by his father, so Jesus came to his own brethren, the Jews, came in their interest, as the representative of the Father, was hated without a cause, and was actually put to death, murdered. Nevertheless, in the Lord's providence this very hatred will ultimately bring him to the throne of earth, and to the place of power, and give him control over all the food, the "bread of life," and thus indirectly make him the life-giver, not only to the world of mankind, represented by the Egyptians, but also to his brethren, the Jews--to as many as will receive the bread of life upon the generous terms and conditions then laid down. And "as he was, so are we in this world"--as members of his body--as his fleshly representatives now, and, if faithful, to be his joint-heirs in the throne by and by, and with him to dispense life to the dying world.

We are not to be surprised, therefore, if we find ourselves hated of the world; for, as the Master said, they shall say all manner of evil against us falsely for his sake.

Let us remember his words, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hated you."--`John 15:18,19`.

As our Master was hated without a cause, so let it be with us, so far as possible, that the hatred, malice, envy and murder which may be poured out against us may be wholly unmerited by us--that our lives shall be as nearly pure as possible; that so far as possible our thoughts and words and deeds may show forth the praises of our Lord, and speak of our love for all men, especially for the household of faith. By and by, when the Church shall have been glorified, and a new dispensation inaugurated, those who hate us now, largely because they are blinded by the Adversary and misled, will bow before us, as the Lord's anointed, and we shall have the great pleasure of lifting them up, blessing them, encouraging them and forgiving them; and assisting them back to the full image and likeness of God.

In our Golden Text let us note the significant statement,--"But God was with him." Success in life may be viewed from different standpoints. To some the successful lives are those represented by Alexander the Great, and Caesar, and notable kings, emperors and generals; or by its money accumulators --Croesus, Carnegie, **et al.** But we write for such as have different conceptions of greatness from these;--to those who, without disdain the merits and charities of any, have accepted the divine standard of greatness as delineated in the Bible;--Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Job, David, the holy prophets and apostles, and above all our Lord Jesus. And the secret of the success of each of these was,--"God was with him."

The same principle holds true to-day, in all matters connected with the divine service,--"Without me ye can do nothing." God's favour during the Jewish age was manifested in earthly prosperities; but not so in this age, when spiritual prosperity alone indicates God's favour, and when not many rich or great are called, but chiefly the poor of this world, rich in faith, heirs of the Kingdom. And, if God be with us and for us, who can be against us? What will their opposition amount to? They may indeed cause us pain or inconvenience, but they cannot harm us or injure our highest interests; because the Almighty has given assurance that "All things shall work for good to those who love him, to the called ones in his purpose." But what must be the character of this class whom God is with and for; and for whose blessing he intervenes in all of life's affairs?

Ah! they are a peculiar people--zealous of good works--zealous for righteousness--zealous for God and his favor--zealous for his service and the smile of his face--faithful, trustful, meek. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God"; now we have these assurances of God's favours which will surely continue with us if we seek earnestly to follow the footsteps of our dear Redeemer--walking not after the flesh, but after the spirit. Let us, therefore, remember to purge ourselves of envy, malice, selfishness, including self-conceit; that we may be vessels unto honour and meet for our Master's service.

IN THE SCHOOL OF ADVERSITY GEN. 39:20-40:15

"For God was with Joseph, and showed him mercy."

AS THE FAVORED child of his beloved wife, Rachel, Joseph was no doubt esteemed by his father as the special inheritor of the Abrahamic promises. He remembered his own experiences, and how the divine favour had come to him, making him an heir of that promise; and doubtless he had, to a greater or less extent, communicated these hopes and promises to all of his sons, and especially to Joseph, his favoured one. Joseph's dreams, which so angered his brethren, must have appealed to him and to his father as rather an intimation on God's part of his pre-eminence. It must therefore have caused great disappointment and chagrin to Joseph, first to find himself in the pit, and his strong cryings and tears unheard both by his brethren and the Lord. It must have been a source of bitter disappointment and chagrin when he found himself sold to the Ishmaelites, to be a slave. But however disappointing these circumstances we can see that they were profitable experiences, tending to develop in him a proper character, if rightly accepted--to develop patience, obedience, trust.

There are good lessons in Joseph's experiences for all who are hoping to be heirs of the spiritual features of this same Abrahamic covenant,--joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord. (Gal. 3:29.) The promise is sure, and the privilege of inheriting is ours; but in order that we may be prepared for that service and its responsibilities it is needful that we should learn lessons of humility, patience, faith, endurance. Our Lord, the head of this "Seed of Abraham," endured such contradiction of sinners, and trials and testings, and learned obedience to the Father's will even unto death,--although he was perfect, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. Much more does it seem necessary that we who are called to be "members of his body" should pass through severe testings and trials, to be fitted and prepared for the glory that shall follow.

Arrived in Egypt, the Lord's blessing was upon Joseph in a remarkable manner, in that he was sold as a slave to a wealthy master. We have little insight into Joseph's previous history, but apparently he was a remarkable boy when he entered Potiphar's house at seventeen years of age. His manliness and sedateness and faithfulness to duty and quick intelligence were a good inheritance from his father, who had earnestly desired his birth;--which was, indeed, in answer to prayer. He evidently inherited considerable of his father's faith, benevolence and executive ability, and as a result rose rapidly in Potiphar's house to a position of great responsibility, to have charge over all his master's affairs. We cannot doubt that the boy's mind frequently reverted to his father and brethren, and his dreams, and to the Abrahamic covenant. Unquestionably he believed in those promises, and doubtless often wondered how they would be fulfilled,--what would be the leadings of divine providence in his affairs. His faith in God, his trust in the promises, served to separate him from the evil influences connected with that sudden transfer of his life from the pasture fields of Canaan to the busy scenes and luxuries and pleasures and sins of one of the greatest cities in the world at that time, a capital of the most renowned nation in that day.

So it is with every life; there is need of an ideal, of a hope, of a good ambition, to act as a ballast and to keep the life steady in the midst of the divers winds and currents of the present evil world. The boy or the girl who has had a proper training

by godly parents, especially in respect to the hopes set before us in the gospel, has much advantage every way over youthful companions who have no specific object and motive in life, who lack the ballast of the divine promises, and are driven hither and thither by the changing winds of time, generally into folly and often into sin, in search of satisfaction, which all crave. Christian parents who have been derelict of duty toward their children cannot too quickly correct the fault and help them to settle their minds upon the only things that can bring them true peace and joy and satisfaction, and balance, in the storms of life.

But if Joseph thought he had learned all the necessary lessons of experience, and that his course henceforth would be one of prosperity, he was mistaken. Divine providence had marked out for him a higher station than that of chief overseer of the household affairs and business of General Potiphar; and if his station was to be a higher one, likewise also he must receive further lessons in a still severer school, in order to be prepared for the still greater exaltation in due time. Suddenly, while evidently enjoying his master's confidence and his mistress' favour, calamity came upon him, and that through no fault of his own, but really because of his faithfulness to his master. He was falsely accused by Potiphar's spiteful wife. He was cast into prison; and this expression, "prison," meant and still means something entirely different in Egypt and all eastern countries from what it means in Europe and America. There prisons were dark, loathsome, terrible places; and prisoners were frequently horribly mistreated, bound in iron fetters, etc. That this was Joseph's treatment, at first, seems evident from a reference to the matter in `Psalm 105:18`: "Whose feet they hurt with fetters; he was laid in iron." This must have been a severe trial to Joseph, a doubly bitter experience by reason of the hopes he had been entertaining respecting divine favour and future exaltation.

And so it is with the spiritual heirs of the Abrahamic promises: sometimes, while in the discharge of duty to the best of our ability, and when apparently we have the Lord's blessing and favor upon us and our affairs in a most marked degree, suddenly trouble may arise, adversity come, the powers of darkness seem to triumph, and for the moment we may be apparently culprits in the judgment of our fellow-men, and apparently forsaken by divine providence. The only consolation in such conditions is that we have suffered wrongfully--"as deceivers, yet true." Such experiences, doubtless, are needful to us; for though we may sing:--"I would rather walk in the dark with God, Than go alone in the light," yet this might be but an empty boast unless we were put through the trying experiences which would develop such faith, such a trust, as would hold to the Lord's hand, and trust divine providence in the darkest hour. We are to learn to walk by faith, and not by sight, to trust our Lord where we cannot trace him.

Joseph's faith evidently stood the test, and his nobility of character shone out even under those adverse conditions; and this became a sign to the master of the prison that the Lord was with Joseph, that he was a peculiarly exemplary and wise young man-- now twenty-seven years old. The warden of the prison was anxious to have such a faithful servant to assist him in his work. Indeed, there is always room in this world for efficient men and women, and the most efficient are those in whom is the spirit of the Lord, and who have "the wisdom which cometh from above--first pure, then peaceable, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits." (`James 3:17`.) The prison keeper doubtless was actuated by selfish motives to favour Joseph and put him in charge of the prisoners. But no matter for this; it was the operation of divine providence, nevertheless, and not merely Joseph's abilities that secured for him the position. However, we are to note that those whom God specially favours, and

specially uses, must have character. A rough diamond may not look better than an ordinary pebble, but it has something of firmness and purity about it that ordinary pebbles do not have, that justifies the cutting and polishing and ultimate mounting as a gem. So we are to remember that while all our blessings are of the Lord and through Christ, nevertheless we have something to do in the matter of "making our calling and election sure"; we must have the love, the devotion, the zeal for God and for righteousness; and not only must we have this character, but we must have the submission which will enable us to accept and profit by the various trials of faith and patience which divine providence sees proper to permit us to experience for the trimming and polishing of the jewel.

Not only were Joseph's experiences as a slave and as a prisoner calculated to give him a sympathy for those in adversity, but additionally he was learning lessons of experience and wisdom, educational in their character, which would prepare him in time to stand before King Pharaoh and to be made his Prime Minister. Some of these experiences he gained in the prison, as related in this lesson. The prisoners at that time were not all culprits, but sometimes the subjects of the king's displeasure. Two such persons high in Pharaoh's household (the "butler" or cup-bearer to the king, being one of the highest officers in honour and trust, and the baker, the manager of the king's culinary department, and general steward of the household) were cast into the same prison with Joseph because of having in some manner offended the king; and as Joseph had by this time chief charge of the prisoners he must have come frequently and into intimate contact with these men, so well versed in the affairs of the kingdom. And under the circumstances they would undoubtedly be communicative to Joseph, as we may be sure he was receptive to all the information obtainable. They must have thought him a very different sort of prisoner from others of that time when he even noticed so small a matter as sadness upon their faces, and enquired considerably respecting the same. So all of the spiritual heirs of the Abrahamic promise, while passing through the trials and difficulties needful to their preparation and polishing for the future glory, must learn to be compassionate. "Blessed are the merciful; they shall obtain mercy." Their own experiences help to mollify their hearts, and make them tender-hearted toward all who are in trouble. All of the Lord's people should be peculiar in these respects--"full of mercy and good fruits."

Joseph's expression of sympathy soon brought from the prisoners an explanation of their sadness-- they had each dreamed on the previous night, and each was troubled, thinking that his dream foreboded evil. Joseph was blessed by the Lord with some intuitive understanding of dreams, and promptly gave their interpretation-- one of the officers would in a short time be released, while the other would be executed; and having sympathized with the one who would suffer, and having congratulated the one who would be released, Joseph made request of the latter that in his coming days of prosperity he would remember him and his kindness, and if possible secure his release through the king's mercy.

Joseph's two dreams, and now these two dreams of the butler and baker, and two subsequent dreams by Pharaoh, all give evidence of having been in some manner divinely inspired, and intended to exercise certain influences and to bring about certain results. In our accepting these for all that they were, we are not to be understood as endorsing the thought that every dream is of the Lord, or is to have a special prophetic or providential fulfilment. Quite to the contrary, we believe that the majority of dreams are mental fictions, the result frequently of disordered stomachs and of the brain being partly asleep and partly awake, producing often unreasonable and absurd images, without special meaning except as warnings for better care in

respect to our eating. We may even go further than this, and say that we feel sure that there is still a third kind of dreams,--dreams of a still different origin--neither inspired by the Lord nor by indigestion, but by evil spirits, for the purpose of misleading the dreamer. To make sure that our dreams are not the inspiration of evil we must make sure that we are not the children of the Evil One, but that having renounced sin and fled for refuge to the hope set before us in the Gospel, we have, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus our Lord, obtained adoption into the family of God, and thus obtained relationship to him and protection from the power of the Evil One, and his delusions as respects our affairs; and come under the gracious promise that "all things shall work together for good" to us because we love God and have been called according to his purpose. In the dreams mentioned in this connection we are to notice that those of the butler and baker and Pharaoh were not the dreams of God's people, but nevertheless were evidently inspired of him, and that the purposes of these dreams were not specially in the interest of the dreamers, but largely in the interest of Joseph.

As respects the Lord's people of to-day, there is much less necessity for dreams than in olden times. We have the Word of God--God's testimony bearing upon every subject needful to us. This message is so complete that the Apostle could say that by it the man of God might be thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work. (2 Tim. 3:16,17.) This should not hinder us from recognizing a dream as from the Lord, provided it would stand the tests of the written Word--provided the dream was not in any sense in conflict with God's revelation in the Scriptures. If the dream be in conflict with the Scriptures we are to reject the dream. If we find it in harmony with the Scriptures we are to accept it because of that harmony, and merely allow it to draw our attention more particularly to the Scriptures with which it accords. But whether by dreams or walking by faith entirely, and not by sight or dreams in any particular, the true child of God, the heir of the spiritual promises to Abraham, is to look for, to expect, to find, to realize, more fully even than our Golden Text says of Joseph, that "the Lord was with him, and showed him mercy." If the Lord be with us and show mercy toward us, no matter how he may do this, we are to take his favor with grateful hearts, and to show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light, and who eventually will bring us out of the prison-house of death into the glories of the everlasting Kingdom, to joint-heirship with his Son.

R1635

ENVY AND DISCORD
GENESIS 37:1-11

Golden Text--"See that ye fall not out by the way."--Gen. 45:24

The slow rate at which the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob of a numerous posterity were being fulfilled is quite noteworthy here. It was now two centuries since Abraham was called, and yet his posterity were but few. Jacob was now one hundred and nine years old, and had but twelve sons and one daughter. But they were well-born children, desired and welcomed, and considered gifts of God (Gen. 29:32-35; 30:6-13,17-24),--and they were taught to reverence God and his

promises. Yet over against these good influences were others less favourable--(1) The conditions of a polygamous home, with four sets of children, were not those which tend to peace and harmony and love in the family. Such a home was not after God's institution, but, as the Apostle Paul intimates, "the times of this ignorance God winked at." (See our issue of Nov. 1, '92; Article, The Law of God.) (2) They came in contact with an immoral heathen community, both in Haran and in Shechem. (3) And their shepherd life, caring for large flocks and herds which must necessarily be widely scattered, separated them from home and gave them much leisure for either good or evil.

The experience of Joseph here introduced was the beginning of a train of providential circumstances which gave to the children of Israel the very necessary experience in Egypt in contact with the highest civilization and learning the world had then realized. There they remained under peculiar circumstances of discipline and training for four hundred years; and there as a people they learned to some extent the important lesson of humility and faith in the love and power of God. Joseph, a bright boy of seventeen and the special favourite of his father because he was a son of his old age and a very exemplary son, seemed to incur the displeasure of his brethren through envy on their part and guilelessness on his own. The elder brethren, instead of sharing the father's love for their young and promising brother, were envious of him and could not speak peaceably to him. Joseph was innocent and unaware of the malice that their envy was fast engendering, and was shocked at what he did see and know of their misconduct, and very naturally reported the state of affairs to his father on his return home.

Then, too, in his artlessness he told them his very significant dreams, which he probably did not understand, but which they interpreted as an indication of his future supremacy; and this, together with their knowledge of his father's special favour, probably made them fear a future supremacy, which idea they could not endure. Hence the plot to get him out of the way. Envy and hatred fast matured their bitter fruitage of a murderous spirit and intent. While God permitted all the sons of Jacob to thus manifest their disposition, he stood ready to overrule their course of conduct for the furtherance of his purposes. Thus the overruling providence of God is always compatible with man's free agency.

The coat of many colours--a royal garment --which Jacob gave to Joseph, probably was also interpreted by the brethren as an indication of the father's purpose to bestow the chief blessing on him, the eldest son of the second wife, since Reuben, the eldest son of the first wife, had already forfeited it. --`Gen. 49:4`. The dreams of Joseph were quite prophetic of his later supremacy in Egypt, when his father and brethren all came in the extremity of famine to do him honour and to receive of his bounty. Doubtless also the impression they made on his mind by them proved a source of comfort and cheer in the midst of severe trials and temptations in Egypt, before he was summoned to the seat of power and influence. The envy of Joseph's brethren, although eventually overruled in harmony with God's promise to Abraham, brought upon them severe experiences and bitterness. Envy is one of the indigenous fruits of the fallen nature: itself bad, it is almost sure to lead to every evil work; and, unless corrected, it will eventuate in death.

JOSEPH SOLD INTO EGYPT

GENESIS 37:23-36

Golden Text--"Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good."--Gen. 50:20

In tracing the overruling providence of God in the lives of some of his chosen people of the past we find a great stimulus to our faith; and in the noble examples of the ancient worthies we should indeed find spurs to our zeal for God and our faithfulness in his service. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph--how beautifully they walked with God! how simple and childlike their trust in the dark as well as in the light! and how earnest and sincere their devotion!

In our last lesson, Joseph, the favourite son of Jacob's old age, was brought to our attention (a dutiful and promising boy of seventeen), and his prophetic dreams and the envy of his brethren toward him. In this lesson we see how that envy and hatred brought forth their fruits. With the exception of two of the brethren--Reuben and Judah--all were desirous of taking his life; but the two did not dare to openly oppose the rest, so they suggested other measures. Reuben had him cast into a pit from whence he intended secretly to rescue him, but where the others were agreeable to letting him die of starvation. But before Reuben could accomplish his purpose of rescue Judah had proposed his sale to a company of travelling merchants going down to Egypt; and to this they had agreed, and had disposed of their young brother and divided the price among themselves. Of this transaction Reuben evidently was not informed, and he shared his father's grief at the supposed death of Joseph.

Judah's motive was apparently a double one--first, to ease his conscience by choosing the lesser of the two evils, avoiding to incur the guilt of his brother's blood, and yet desirous to accomplish the purpose of getting rid of him, and that at a slight profit to themselves. Then, in common with the other eight, he was willing to lie to his father and to make believe that Joseph was dead. Judah's choice of the lesser of two evils he may have regarded as a species of virtue, as the suggestion from, "Let us slay our brother," to "Let us sell our brother," presents a strong contrast. Thus men are often deceived by comparing a great with a lesser evil, or themselves one with another, and especially with those of meaner disposition, instead of with the perfect standards of virtue and true holiness set forth in the Scriptures. This supposed loss of a beloved son was another severe trial for Jacob. Evidently Joseph was the one in whose line of descent he looked for the fulfilment of the divine covenant. He was the eldest son of his beloved Rachel, and a son after his own heart, in whom was the reverence of God and the love of righteousness. The coat of many colours seems to have been his expression of this hope, which he did not seek to conceal from his family, being desirous and hopeful probably that they also would share his sentiments. And in Reuben's favour it may be remarked that of all the brethren he had more reason to be envious of Joseph, since he was the eldest son of Leah, the first wife. For twenty-three long years Jacob suffered the loss of this beloved son before he received the glad tidings--"Joseph is yet alive." Yet he faithfully held to the promises of God and waited for the consolation of Israel, and humbly developed the graces of meekness and patience which, in God's sight, are of great value.

In the case of Joseph the trial was one of great severity. From being a beloved and favourite son, tenderly reared in his father's house, he was suddenly transported to the position of a slave in a foreign and heathen land. Added to this, too, were the bitter

experience of the murderous hatred and cold-hearted cruelty of his brothers and the thought of his father's grief and loneliness, and that without any apparent prospect of ever seeing his face again, or of even hearing a word from him, as no railroads or telegraphs or mailing arrangements then facilitated communication between foreign nations, and Joseph was a servant having no command of time or money.

This was surely a bitter experience for a young man of seventeen; but as he left the scenes of his childhood and all that he held dear on earth, and that under such painful circumstances, like his father when he fled from Esau, bereft of everything else, he took with him the staff of the divine promises and the principles of truth and righteousness under whose influence he had been reared, and he resolved to be loyal and faithful to God and to maintain his integrity under whatever circumstances he should be placed. Alas! how few young men in these days--nor did they in those days--make such resolutions, even under the most favourable circumstances. This is the age when they generally think they should be sowing their wild oats, of which they generally forget they must afterward reap the bitter harvest.

While God could have prevented and might have interfered at any step of these distressing circumstances, we see that he did not, but that he allowed each one to freely manifest his disposition for good or for evil; yet above them all we see his overruling providence in turning these very circumstances to account in a most marvellous way for the furtherance of his benevolent designs and to the special blessing of his faithful servants. Thus, for instance, Joseph being thrown more upon his own resources and in contact with a new, and at the time the most advanced, civilization of the world, received a new and valuable education which otherwise he could not have received, and a discipline that developed manly strength, courage, tact, and firmness of character; while his isolation from all the old home associations led him to closer communion with God and reliance upon his power.

Then, too, in the providence of God, Joseph was the forerunner of all Israel in the land of Egypt, where God proposed to give that entire nation a needed and valuable experience for four hundred years, in contact with the highest civilization of that day, yet under the humiliating circumstances of servitude which would tend to humble them, and also to teach them reliance upon God. Here, too, their race would be kept pure and distinct from others, since, as slaves, they could not intermarry with the Egyptians. And through Israel in the land of Egypt, not only the Egyptians, but other nations through them, were to learn something of the power and character of the true God.

A very special lesson of importance to us, in considering the course of divine providence with these ancient worthies, may be gathered from the fact that the value of their experience in developing character and in shaping circumstances for future good is so manifest to us from the standpoint of the ends attained, while to them, as they passed through those experiences, they had to walk by faith trusting the guiding hand of God, where they could not trace his loving purposes. Abraham could not know that God would provide himself a lamb other than Isaac; and therefore it was his part to obey the divine command, even to the raising of the knife to slay his son. Jacob could not know how Esau would meet him in peace and permit him to enjoy the good of the land; but it was his part to arise and take all his house and all his goods and go to meet Esau when the Lord commanded. Joseph could not know just how all the painful circumstances that befell him after he left his father's house in search of his brethren were to work together for such great good for himself and for all his father's house, and for all Egypt as well; but it was his part to carry with him into Egypt the principles of divine truth and righteousness and the noble example of a

godly character, and as a servant to Potiphar to faithfully perform his service to the best of his ability. And while, like his father Jacob, he thus walked in the path of faith and duty, God could add his blessing; and we, at this end of the line, see the blessed results of their faithfulness, trust and humility.

Just so, in the light of eternity, the past experiences of our lives will appear if, like them, we prove faithful under all circumstances --in the dark as well as in the light, in the storm as well as in the calm. As children of God we must all have the discipline of experience: let us see to it, therefore, that we patiently and meekly submit ourselves to God, taking courage from the noble examples of the ancient worthies, and from the manifestations of God's love and care and wisdom in making all things work together for good to them as he has promised to do for us also.

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JOSEPH'S EXPERIENCES

Joseph's brethren sold him into slavery, and when they afterward found him the lord of all Egypt they feared greatly the punishment of their crime. But to quiet their fears Joseph said, "Be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life." (Gen. 45:5.) But, we answer, no ground is found here for charging the crime of Joseph's brethren upon the Almighty. Stephen, filled with the holy spirit, declared (Acts 7:9) that their course was not inspired by God, but by their own envy; which fully agrees with James 1:13,16. Shall we then say that Joseph made a mistake in the statement he made? No; both Joseph's and Stephen's statements are correct. Joseph's brethren were full of envy and they premeditated his murder, but God caused fear to operate upon the mind of one of them, through whose suggestion the envious brethren took a different course of action and sold Joseph for a slave. Thus God's part in no sense altered the moral responsibilities of Joseph's brethren; nor did it inspire an evil thought. It merely turned the evil thought into another channel (to sell instead of to murder him), which would not conflict with God's plan in reference to Joseph, his servant. It is merely an illustration of God's power to overrule without interfering with the moral character of man. So, too, with all the other affairs of Joseph. Because Joseph was taken from prison to Pharaoh's throne, it is not to be argued that God was the inspiring cause of the crime of Potiphar's wife, on account of which Joseph was sent to prison. On the contrary, God could have brought Joseph to the throne of Egypt in a hundred different ways wholly aside from Potiphar's wife and Joseph's envious brethren. The way adopted was the natural course of events which God overruled and turned; so that without interfering with the wills of any, his will for good was carried out.

Thus it is that God causes the wrath of man (the dispositions of the sinful fallen race, not dispositions which he inspires and forces upon men) to praise him, while the remainder which would interfere with his plans he will restrain. When, in the future, it shall be made clearly manifest to all that the efforts of evil men against God and against his children were all overruled and used of God for some testing or other expedient blessing toward those who love and serve him, then the present wrath of men will begin to praise the Lord by showing his wisdom and goodness.

AFFLICTED, YET A COMFORTER GENESIS 40 AND 41

"God giveth grace to the humble."--1 Peter 5:5

JOSEPH may well be designated the model young man of Old Testament times. In some respects, he would be a model for any time. There is a distinction to be made, however. Joseph lived before the time of spirit-begetting, and hence was merely a natural man, not a Christian. He lived before the time of Bibles, before the time of preaching and Sunday Schools. He merely inherited from his father a strong faith in the God of Abraham, who had promised that, ultimately, a blessing should come to all people through Jacob's posterity. Joseph, who was one of that family, revered God and sought to live humbly, nobly. His faithfulness to God and his trust in God's Promise served as a rudder to guide and direct all the affairs of his life. Whatsoever he did was with a view to pleasing God and winning His approval.

Such faithfulness was probably rare at that time, as it is today, and the reward came in Joseph's advancement to the highest station in the house of his master--that of steward. His conscientiousness led him to be careful, economical and wise; and his master could and did entrust everything to his care. Young men of Joseph's type are very much valued everywhere today--yea, they have been valued in every period of the world's history--trustworthy men, faithful men, economical men, wise men; and all these qualities go with godliness--with faith in God, and a realization of responsibility to Him. But just in the height of Joseph's prosperity, calamity came. His steadfastness to principle angered his mistress. She falsely accused him; and he was cast into prison and made to appear guilty of a heinous crime, disloyal to his master and benefactor. Yet all the while he was innocent; but only God and himself knew of that innocence. The Adversary had made circumstantial evidence to appear so strong that Joseph's guilt was not questioned. The poet Shakespeare noted this trait of human weakness in these words: "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned."

How strange it seems that God would allow so terrible a blight to fall upon the life of one who was seeking to walk in the ways of righteousness! We can imagine Joseph's querying why this evil had befallen him, and saying with the Prophet, "They that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered; while those who seek to live righteously suffer persecution." But evidently Joseph did not permit himself to question the Wisdom of Divine Providence which took him to prison in Egypt any more than he allowed himself to question the Wisdom of the same Providence in permitting him to be sold a slave into Egypt. His faith in God endured the test. He became stronger as he found himself shut away from all earthly hopes and ambitions--dead to the world. The more did he cultivate faith in the Almighty; the more did he determine that at any cost he would live righteously, soberly, reverentially. Even in prison, his faithfulness, intelligence and general goodness were recognized. He became the prison keeper's trusty man and assistant. Such a character, no matter how much traduced, misrepresented and slandered, eventually will commend itself to those with whom it has close contact. And the principle holds good today, as then.

DREAMS OF BUTLER AND BAKER

The prison regulations of old were less methodical than at present. Joseph had been in prison for years, had probably been forgotten, and might have continued their indefinitely, had not something occurred to bring his case to official notice. When he was twenty-eight years old, two high officials were thrust into prison because Pharaoh had taken some offence at their conduct. One of these was the king's secretary and butler, or cup-bearer. The other was head of his culinary department.

Joseph, as the general overseer of the prison, came in contact with these men, noted their sadness of face and tendered sympathy. What a noble example! Instead of moping about, bemoaning his lot, Joseph was cheerful, trusting in God and waiting for some circumstance by which God would eventually open up the way before him. Such a noble character can always find time to speak a word of consolation to those in trouble! What an example to worldly men of today! What an example to Christian men of today, who have much advantage over him in so many ways. There are some who tell us that our race is rising so rapidly from brute nature by evolutionary processes, that impliedly Joseph, living nearly four thousand years ago-- two thousand years after Adam's creation--would be almost a brute, only a few removes from the monkey. But how different a view is given of him by this little narrative, which makes no attempt to pointing a moral with his experiences, but merely records them as matters of fact!

When Joseph learned that the two official prisoners were troubled because of impressive dreams, he volunteered interpretations. The one was encouraging, and the other discouraging. He told the butler that within three days he would be back again in favor with the king, but informed the baker that within three days he would be executed. Then Joseph, mindful of the fact that he had a duty to perform in respect to attaining his own liberty, urged upon the butler--the one he had so encouraged and befriended--that when at liberty he would remember his comforter and do something to bring Joseph's case before proper authorities, that he might be heard and, if possible, be released.

But alas, for the hardness of heart so prevalent! The butler forgot all about Joseph, his prisoner friend, for two years! Then the matter was brought to his attention by Pharaoh's dream; for none of the wise men of Egypt were able to interpret it. With apologies for his neglect, the butler told the king of the dream experiences of the baker and himself in prison and of the wonderful young man Joseph, who by some god-given power had interpreted their dreams, just as these turned out.

During those two years, Joseph doubtless hoped much and waited longingly for some adjustment of his case. We doubt not that, instead of growing faint in respect to his faith in God, he all the more earnestly laid hold upon the Lord, and realized that his experiences must be for good. And so they were; for it was when Joseph was just thirty years of age--when he had just reached manhood under the old-time law--that Pharaoh sent for him to interpret his dreams, and rewarded him very highly.

PHARAOH'S DREAMS INTERPRETED

Pharaoh related his two dreams. In the first he saw seven fine, strong cattle, and a little later the same number of very poor, lean cattle--the worst he had ever seen. In the dream, the lean cattle ate up the fat ones, and looked none the better. In the second dream, the king saw a fine stalk of corn grow up out of the earth, bearing seven full, healthy ears of corn; and then he saw another stalk with seven withered

ears, good for nothing. The latter swallowed up the former, and looked none the better.

Young Joseph quickly gave the explanation of the dreams; but before doing so, he very distinctly told the king that the interpretation came not from himself, but from God. Thus he exemplified the Scriptural teaching, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him," and "He shall give thee the desires of thine heart."--`Prov. 3:6`; 'Psalm 37:4'. Joseph explained that the two dreams referred to the same matter--that unitedly they taught that there would be seven years of great plenty in the land of Egypt; and that these would be followed by seven years of famine, which would fully consume all the surplus of the plentiful years. Proceeding, Joseph offered the suggestion that God evidently meant this information to be used by Pharaoh, and recommended that, forthwith, a special agent of the king should be appointed to buy up all the surplus grain in the seven years of plenty and to store it for use during the seven years of famine. Pharaoh very wisely acceded, and with manifestation of great breadth of mind and desire to serve the interests of his people, promptly appointed Joseph himself to be the purchaser of the surplus corn of the years of plenty, to have full charge of the matter and to attend to its disbursement in the following years of famine.

Thus Joseph stepped out of prison into a fourteen years' contract. From suffering because of slander he suddenly stepped into a place of highest authority, next to Pharaoh, in the greatest empire of those days. Can we doubt that God's hand was in the matter of Joseph's success and exaltation? Surely not! Nor should we infer any lack of Divine favour in Joseph's experiences of adversity. On the contrary, we may feel sure that the lessons of his adversity were merely preparations for his subsequent experiences as Pharaoh's logos, or mouthpiece, throughout the kingdom.

We are reminded again of the lesson of a week ago-- that Joseph's experiences were typical of those of Jesus and the Church, His followers. The Bible assures us that the graces of humility and patience are both closely related to love and loyalty. St. Paul reminds us of this when he declares, "If ye be without chastisement,...then are ye...not sons. For what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" He reminds us that "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."--`Hebrews 12:6-8`. It was so with Jesus, and with all the faithful Apostles, and has been so with all the followers of Jesus during this Gospel Age. It will undoubtedly continue to be true in the case of all the consecrated Church. It is because the Lord Jesus loves these noble characters that He counts them worthy of trials and testing's, disciplines, etc. These are necessary to qualify them for the positions of honour, glory, immortality and great responsibility, to which the Father has called Jesus and His brethren, the Church.

THE VALUE OF ADVERSITY

Jacob's special love for his son Joseph manifested itself in favouritism--the princely coat, or robe, etc. Quite possibly he would have spoiled his son, had not Divine Providence interfered and taken him entirely out of this father's control. Many fathers, especially the rich, have made similar mistakes. Hence the sons of the rich are not always a credit to their fathers. The great Heavenly Father, however, makes no such mistakes. His people are assured that trials and difficulties are marks rather of their relationship to God and of His loving care over them. True, this providential care is restricted: "The Lord knoweth them that are His." His special dealings are with His consecrated people-- those who have entered into a covenant with Him, who have become His servants and His children. To these alone belongs the promise that "all

things shall work together for good to them that love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."--`Romans 8:28`.

While this special call applies peculiarly to the Church of this Gospel Age, there is a sense in which it was applicable to the Hebrews, since the time of Abraham. Joseph belonged to this line which was in covenant relationship with God. This accounts for God's dealing with him rather than with young men of other families than Abraham's. Incidentally, it is worthy of notice that the Israelites passed through many trying experiences because of being God's people. Many of those experiences they might have escaped, had they not come into covenant relationship with God. But had they escaped the trials and difficulties, they would have escaped certain privileges and blessings also. And the blessings which God gives always outweigh the adversities which prepare for them.

JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN ELECTIONS

This reminds us that the Bible declares that the Jewish people, and subsequently the Christians, are God's Elect-- God's Chosen People--the Seed of Abraham, natural and Spiritual. Both have offers of God's blessings not accorded to other peoples; and in both cases the trying experiences are to fit the elect ones for the future glories to which they have been invited.

Nevertheless, God has also a great blessing in store for the non-elect. During the thousand years of Messiah's reign, the elect Church, the saintly only, will be Messiah's joint-heirs in the great Kingdom of God, which will then take control of the earth. Then also the Elect from the Hebrews will be used, in another part of the work, in conjunction with the Christian Church, the one on the Heavenly plane, the other on the earthly. Through these two Israel's, God's blessings are to be poured out on all nations, kindred's, peoples and tongues.

Although God has not specially supervised the affairs of any except these two elect classes, nevertheless we see that He has permitted, in a general way, great lessons of adversity to come to the whole human family. As the special trials and difficulties of the elect classes are intended to work for them special blessing and qualifications for their work as God's agencies, so the general tribulations of the world will give general lessons that will be helpful to all people by giving all experiences with sin and death--by teaching all thus the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

By and by, when Messiah's Kingdom shall be established, when Satan shall be bound, when the reign of righteousness shall begin, when the curse shall be lifted, when the blessing shall flow instead--then the lessons of sorrow and tears and crying and dying will all prove valuable. Humanity will appreciate the great blessings of God in the future very largely by contrast with the evils and sorrows of the present time. When, by and by, they shall learn fully and conclusively that all these sorrows and tears are the results of violation of God's laws and disregard of His injunctions, the lesson undoubtedly will be one that will never be forgotten.

Wherever the ploughshare of trouble has gone, it has served to break up the fallow ground and to make ready for the seed of Divine Truth and grace. The next Age, under Messiah's beneficent rule, will be the time of sowing the seeds of knowledge of God and appreciation of His glorious character and Plan. The results will undoubtedly be glorious, as the Scriptures declare. Eventually all will participate in these blessings everlastingly, except such as intelligently refuse them, choosing sin rather than righteousness, in that Day when the knowledge of the Truth will be given to all and when assistance to righteousness will be apparent.

HATED WITHOUT A CAUSE **GENESIS 37**

"Love Envieth Not."--1 Corinthians 13:4

THE STORY of Joseph and his brethren, beautiful in its simplicity as a narrative, is deeply interesting and instructive, from various viewpoints. One lesson would be the unwisdom of a parent in showing too great a preference for one child above another, and thus cultivating amongst the children a spirit of envy. Another lesson would be along the line of the unwisdom of telling even our dreams to unsympathetic ears: as when Joseph told his dreams to his brethren. In the one dream, he saw eleven shocks of wheat bow down to one shock, which was his. In the other dream, he saw the sun, the moon and the eleven stars all doing homage to him.

Joseph was not to be blamed for having these dreams. Unlike the majority of dreams, they apparently came not from indigestion, but were from the Lord. Joseph was not even to blame for artlessly telling the dream to his brethren; and evidently this was the very thing which the Lord intended should be done. The Lord foreknew the jealousy of Joseph's brethren, and how envy would be cultivated in their minds; and He gave the opportunity for it; for He had already mapped out Joseph's subsequent experiences, which the envy of his brethren merely helped to accomplish.

We may, however, learn the lesson that in general it is the part of wisdom to keep to one's self truths not necessary for another to know which might merely arouse opposition. Jesus encouraged this very thought, saying, "Cast not your pearls before swine, lest they turn again and injure you." Very deep truths connected with the Divine Plan and with Christian hopes had better not be told to others than those for whom they are intended by the Lord--namely, the meek.

JOSEPH A TYPE OF MESSIAH

The most important feature of today's Bible Study is that which in addition to all that we have suggested, recognizes Joseph as a type, or prophetic picture of Christ, the Messiah. Joseph was kind to his brethren and was on an errand of mercy to them when their envy plotted his death, and later on sold him into slavery in Egypt. His brethren hated him without a cause--merely because he was good, because his father loved him, and because God in the dreams foreshadowed his coming exaltation.

Joseph's brethren should have said, "Let us rejoice that we have so noble a brother. Let us rejoice if it be God's will that he should be very highly exalted. God's Promise made to our grandfathers, Abraham and Isaac, and to our father Jacob, may thus be reaching a fulfilment. Let God's blessings come in whatever way He sees best. We will rejoice with our brother, as we see that he is pleasing to God and to our father Jacob. We will seek more and more to copy his character." But they were envious to the point of cruelty, first resolving to murder him, and later, merely as an alternative, to sell him as a slave.

THEY HATED HIM WITHOUT A CAUSE

But God's providence continued with Joseph and blessed him as a slave, and through much tribulation finally brought him to the throne of Egypt--next in influence and power to Pharaoh himself. Then it was that the famine of the land drove Joseph's

brethren to Egypt to buy wheat. Thus was fulfilled his dream--that his brethren bow down, as illustrated in the eleven sheaves which bowed down before his. Later on when his father and the entire family came into Egypt to live in Goshen, they all did obeisance to Joseph, as the representative of the Egyptian Government, thus fulfilling the second dream. But all of these experiences were at the time dark. They all looked as though the Lord had less love for Joseph than for any others of his family, until the time came for his exaltation to the throne. Then everything changed.

WHICH THINGS ARE AN ALLEGORY

The allegorical meaning of all this, as applied to Joseph, is that he was also hated without a cause. We read in `Psalm 69:4`, "They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head." Jesus quoted this statement and applied it to Himself, saying, "They hated Me without a cause." (`John 15:25`.) The brethren of Jesus were the Jews, who crucified Him. But there was no cause of death found in Him.

We perceive that it was for envy that they delivered Him up and called for His crucifixion, because His works were good and theirs were evil; because he taught the way of the Lord more perfectly than they; because He declared to them that the time would come when they and all others would recognize Him as the Messiah--coming in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory--and would bow the knee to Him.

As with Joseph, disaster, treachery and shame prepared the way for glory and honour on the throne of Egypt, so with Jesus. His trying experiences proved Him loyal to God and led onward to His exaltation to the right hand of Divine Majesty. St. Paul refers to this, saying of Jesus, "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the Throne of God." (`Hebrews 12:2`.) Again he says, "Though He was rich, for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich" (`2 Corinthians 8:9`), even as the experiences of Joseph--all of his humiliation--prepared the way for him to be succoured and honoured by Pharaoh. Again we read of Jesus, that "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect [through suffering], He became the Author of eternal salvation to all those that obey Him."--Hebrews 5:9.

IF WE SUFFER WITH HIM

The Scriptures assure us that in God's great Plan, not only Jesus is to be exalted to the Throne as the world's Messiah, but with Him is to be a company of brethren, sharers of the same glory, honour and immortality. And these brethren, in God's great Purpose, are required to pass through similar experiences to those of their Elder Brother Jesus. Their experiences, therefore, are illustrated also in Joseph's experiences. They are not on an equality with their Elder Brother. He is designated their Head, their Chief, the Captain of their salvation. So we read again, that God, "in bringing many sons to glory, made the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." --`Hebrews 2:10`. And all of the company of sons received under this great Captain must similarly be perfected through sufferings.

Does not this account for the trying experiences of the Church during the past nineteen centuries? The Apostle John declares, "As He was, so are we, in this world"; and again, "The world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." As Joseph's brethren were blind to the fact that their brother would be their saviour from famine,

as well as the saviour of the Egyptians, so the world fails to realize that only through The Messiah will any have eternal life.

In the very same connection in which Jesus mentions that He was hated without a cause, He plainly forewarns all of His elect followers that they must similarly expect to be hated unjustly. We read, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for My name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me. ...But this cometh to pass that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their Law, They hated Me without a cause."--`John 15:18-25`.

We give in full the same text from which our Lord quoted, "They that hate Me without a cause are more than the hairs of Mine head...Let not them that wait on Thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for My sake; let not those that seek Thee be confounded for My sake, O God of Israel. Because for Thy sake I have borne reproach: shame hath covered My face. I am become a stranger unto My brethren, and an alien unto My mother's children. For the zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon Me. Reproach hath broken My heart; and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave Me also gall for My meat; and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink."--`Psalm 69:4-9,20,21`.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE FACTS

We have considered the facts--that Jesus and all of His followers, according to Divine intention, have suffered shame and contempt. We perceive that, in the case of Jesus and of the early Church, the persecution came from their brethren according to the flesh--from the Jews. And since then, all the way down the Gospel Age, the persecutions of the Church, the brethren of Jesus, the Household of Faith, have come from their brethren, too. These brethren are not Jews, but Christians. As the Jewish religionists in Jesus' day persecuted their more righteous brethren, so since then nominal Christians have been the chief persecutors of the Lord's faithful followers.

This persecution has come upon faithful souls of nearly every denomination. And, sad to say, this persecution has come from unfaithful souls of nearly every denomination. Presbyterians, Covenanters, Episcopalians, Roman Catholics, Methodists and Baptists have all endured persecutions from blinded brethren; and blinded ones amongst themselves have also shared in the persecuting work. In nearly every case the profession has been made that the persecuting was done for the glory of God. Thus the Lord through the Prophet expresses the matter, saying, "Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for My name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified! But He shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed."--`Isaiah 66:5`.

Already the world in general, including the Jews, realize that a great mistake was made in persecuting Jesus unto death. Already to some extent similar transgressions against the faithful followers of Jesus have been recognized. And yet the same blindness, from the same envious disposition, leads on to persecution even in our day. The majority admit that they do not know very distinctly much about God or much about the Bible. They pray for light, and sing, "Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom." And yet, if any light appear, if any voice of love or tenderness be heard, directing toward the dawning of the New Day, and pointing out with clearness

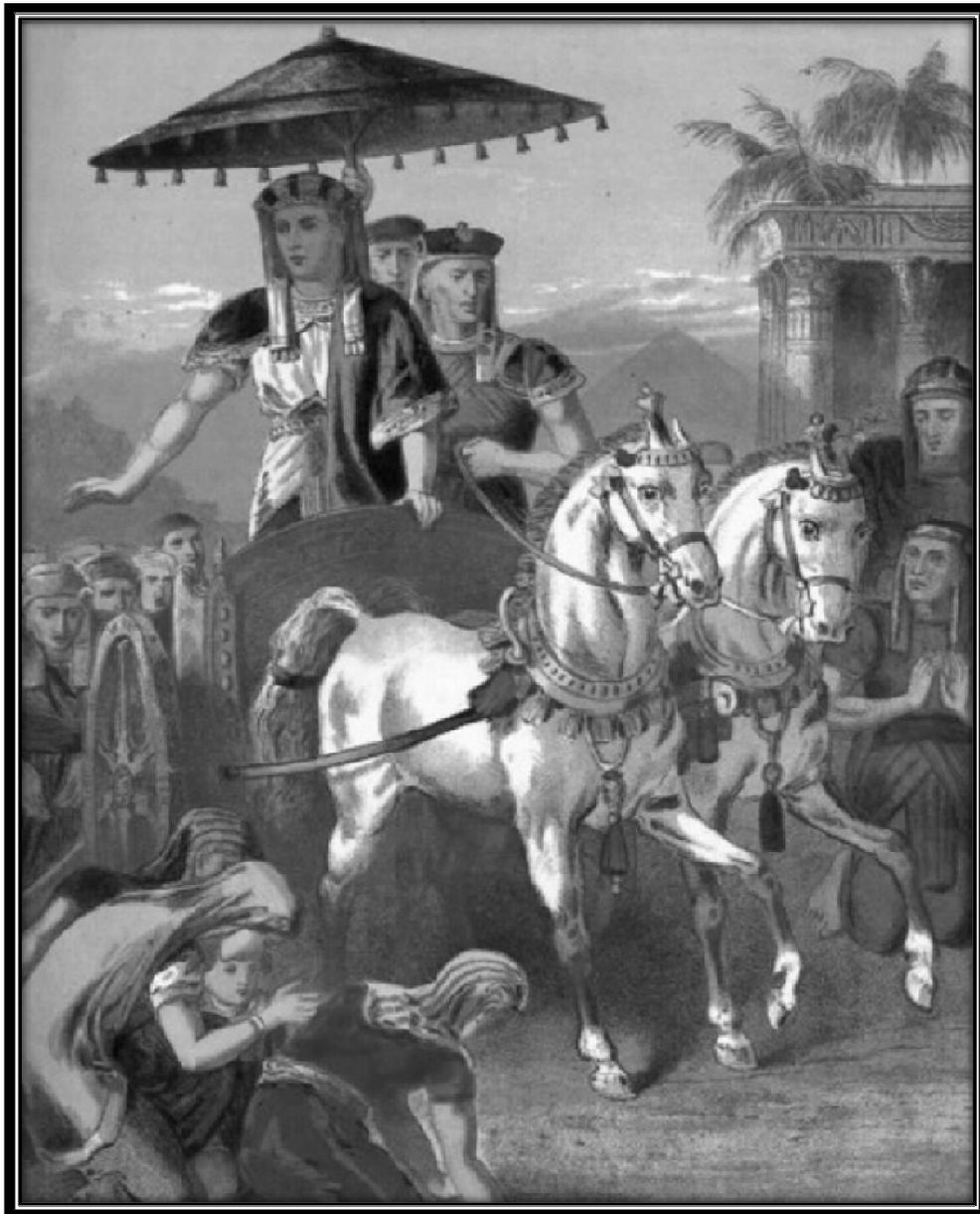
the riches of God's grace and the lengths and breadths of His mercy, immediately their songs for light cease, and their stones of ridicule and slander are hurled. And why? Lest peradventure there should be any change; lest any one should get further light; lest the Divine promise should be fulfilled, and a new Dawn should be ushered in.

But what is the philosophy of these facts of history? Why has God permitted, yea, ordained that Christ should suffer, and that all who would walk in His steps must share in His experiences of ignominy and shame and reproach--suffering with Him? In Jesus' case, the Father used the trying experiences to test the love and loyalty of His Son, and to demonstrate His obedience to angels and to men. Intending to confer upon Him very great glory and honour, the Father would have all to see, as He saw it, the worthiness of the Logos, subsequently Jesus.

In a symbolical picture the Heavenly hosts are represented as acknowledging the propriety of the high exaltation of Jesus, because of His faithfulness unto death, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." And if such a demonstration of the worthiness of Jesus, the Logos, was necessary or proper, much more necessary would it seem that an elect Church, being gathered from amongst a fallen race, should be proven loyal to God to the very last--even unto death. There is a difference, however. In the case of the Master, it was a demonstration that He was perfect before He left the Heavenly glory, and perfect also when He became the Man Christ Jesus--"holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners." "In Him was no sin." In the case of His followers, the imperfection of the flesh still remains; but they are judged, not according to the weaknesses of their flesh--of heredity-- but according to the love and zeal of their hearts. And this loving zeal is witnessed to by their endeavor to walk faithfully in the footsteps of their Leader and Savior, overcoming to the best of their ability the weaknesses of their flesh, and "showing forth the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvellous light."

PART - 2

JOSEPH AT THE THRONE OF EGYPT



JOSEPH RULER IN EGYPT

GEN. 41:38-48

Golden Text--"Them that honor me I will honor."--1 Sam. 2:30.

In Egypt we find Joseph making the best of his new and trying circumstances. Having resolved to look upon the brightest side of things and to act upon the right side, he trusted in God and was cheerful and faithful in all his duties, whether they were agreeable duties or not. He acted thus, not from policy, but from principle--because he loved righteousness and desired the approval of a righteous God.

His faithfulness soon won his master's confidence; "and his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand;... And he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand." And when, after some ten years of faithful service here, he was falsely accused and cast into prison, "and he was laid in iron and his feet were hurt with fetters" (Psa. 105:17,18'), with a clear conscience and a sense of the divine approval he determined to make the best of that situation also; and there too "the Lord was with him and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison;" and there, without any prospect of release, he remained faithful to God and duty for three years, when suddenly, the purposes of this discipline and proving having been served, God set before him an open door. He did not take him out of prison, but in pursuance of the pathway of benevolent helpfulness to others he led him out.

Wherever Joseph was, and no matter what were the circumstances, he did what was right and made the best use of the situation; and his faithfulness in all the little things prepared him for larger and wider fields of usefulness. He was rightly exercised by the experiences of life. He was kind both to the thankful and to the unthankful, generous to the mean as well as the noble, not allowing the injustice and harsh treatment which he received from others to harden his heart. And in all his course we see no signs of distrust in God or of complaining. In his trials he simply clung closer to God and took comfort in the manifestations of his favor, while he trusted where he could not trace him.

When God showed to Joseph the interpretation of the dreams of the butler and baker in prison, he recognized the favour as from God and thought he saw in the circumstance an open door to liberty once more. But the ungrateful butler forgot his benefactor, and for two years more he remained a prisoner. Then the door was swung open--this time, not only to freedom, but to honour and advancement, and Joseph was prepared to enter. His suggestion to Pharaoh of a wise course in view of the predicted famine was an evidence not only of his faith in God but also of a keen, active, business turn of mind. He thus taught that men should act upon their faith promptly and without wavering; and when he was chosen to pilot the nation through the threatening dangers of their future, he showed his great executive ability and his faithfulness there also. In this he was partly favoured by inheritance from his father; but much was added to that by his own energy and force of character. All the open doors to usefulness and honour are of no avail if we lack the energy and force of character to enter them and to carry forward successfully the enterprises to which they lead. Faithfulness, purity of character, nobility of purpose, energy, courage, acquired skill, piety and self-discipline are all necessary to a successful life from God's standpoint.

Joseph's exaltation to the throne of Egypt, where he was second only to the king, may be regarded by some as the full reward of his faithfulness. But evidently Joseph did not so regard it. He still had respect to the promises of God: he did not lose his head and become puffed up with pride on being elevated from the position of a slave and a prisoner to a royal throne, but with the same steady dignity that characterizes a true man, he quietly went about the business of his new office with the same energy, competency, and faithfulness that had characterized him as a slave and as a son and brother in his father's house. His long acquaintance with God, especially under the discipline of adversity, had made him humble, and the graces of character grew beautifully in his prepared heart. But the throne of Egypt had never been the goal of his ambition; for, like Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, he looked for the heavenly city, the Kingdom of God. There was his treasure and there was his heart, and from thence he drew the inspiration of his noble life; and the court of Egypt was esteemed only for its privileges of helpfulness to others.

R2887

FOR GOD WAS WITH HIM
GENESIS 41:38-49

"Them that honour me, I will honour."--1 Sam. 2:30

DIVINE FAVOR was the secret of Joseph's success, as it has been the secret of the success of all who have attained true greatness in the world. In previous ages true success was more or less identified with earthly prosperity, riches and power; but during this Gospel age--the spirit dispensation --true success and divine favour stand related to spiritual prosperity, attainments and usefulness, as exemplified in our Lord Jesus, in the Apostles, and in the less prominent servants of the Cross from their day until now. The principle is the same, though the mode of operation is different. Adversity is still the school in which the chief lessons in character-building are to be learned--in which the correct ideals of life are to be formed, and ultimately to be crystallized into fixed character. The story of Joseph's experiences, which in this lesson culminate in great advancement and blessing, illustrates the fact that God has to do not only with the shaping of national affairs, but also with the individual affairs of all who are "called according to his purpose," and who are seeking to live up to the requirements and conditions of that call.

It was probably because Joseph had some basis of character that the Lord chose to use him to prepare the way for his family to come into Egypt, etc. And we may be sure that had he proven neglectful of the lessons and experiences through which he passed the Lord would have changed or modified his dealings accordingly. As it was, the Lord's favours and blessings were evidently bestowed upon a worthy character, which, so far as we may judge from the record, responded obediently and trustfully in every trial. That Joseph's faith in the Lord was the basis of his strength of character, fidelity to duty and to principle, there is no reason to question. Had he doubted the Lord's providence in his own case, as foreshadowed in his own dreams, he would have been inclined to say to his two princely prisoners, when they related their dreams, as recorded in the last lesson, that they should have no confidence in dreams, for he had proven their unreliableness to his own bitter chagrin, having

dreamed of power and influence, and having received, instead, degradation, slavery, and imprisonment. But he evidently still believed in his dreams, still expected release in some manner, and believed that the Lord was overruling in his affairs.

Such a trust and confidence in the Almighty Ruler, as our Heavenly Father, is still more appropriate in us, the spiritual heirs of the Abrahamic promise; because we have much advantage every way over Joseph and others of our predecessors, who were heirs of only the natural blessings. Those who lived before Christ, no matter how high their station, at the very most were members of the "house of servants," while we of this Gospel age are freely recognized of God as sons, members of the "house of sons," of which our Lord Jesus is the Head. The sons not only are granted, through the holy spirit, deeper and clearer insight into the divine plan, but much advantage every way over the house of servants and over the world in general. Yet as with Joseph and the typical throne of Egypt, it is not sufficient that we should be favoured of God and called to joint-heirship in the Kingdom of earth; but it is necessary that we shall prove submissive and tractable under his disciplines and instructions; that we may be "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." It is necessary especially that our faith should be strong, and to this end that it should be tried, that it may be to the praise of his glory who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Joseph's confidence in his ultimate deliverance, and the fulfilment of God's promise, did not hinder him from doing all he could in a proper manner to effect his own deliverance. We notice how, after kindly treating the imprisoned butler, explaining his dream for him, and rejoicing with him in the prosperity intimated, he solicited that when the prince would again be in royal favour he would kindly remember that his comforter, Joseph, was still in prison, and if possible secure the royal pardon for him. It was proper that he should thus take reasonable steps toward his own liberty, and no doubt the two years longer that he remained in prison brought testings of his faith, of his trust in the Lord; for the butler seems to have forgotten him entirely when his prosperity returned. However, in all this, as we can now see, the Lord was caring for him. He was learning the lessons of patient endurance, of suffering for righteousness' sake, of faith in the Lord. Had he been released by royal decree and set at liberty, he might have gone back to hunt up his father and his brethren in Palestine; or he might have gotten immersed in business of some kind in Egypt; but under divine providence he was kept safely in prison, learning necessary lessons, until he was thirty years of age; and it was at this time that Pharaoh the king, having had two remarkable dreams, which seriously impressed themselves upon his mind, and having consulted the wise man of Egypt, could find no satisfactory solution for them. It was then that the butler bethought him of his own dream while in the prison, and of the wonderful young man there who had interpreted it so accurately, and whose kindness he had so quickly forgotten. Here was an opportunity of serving the king and serving his prisoner-friend; so he mentioned Joseph to Pharaoh in most complimentary terms. Thus we see illustrated the fact that kindnesses done to others, even though they seem to be quickly forgotten, may possibly return in blessing on our own heads later on, and be used of the Lord as channels of blessing.

Pharaoh called for the prisoner, and the explanation of his dreams was so thoroughly satisfactory that he could not doubt their truthfulness, and corroborated by the testimony of the butler, he concluded that Joseph's ability as an interpreter resided in the fact that God was with him; that God was using him; and that in some manner or other the God who had given these dreams, and such an interpretation to so remarkable a young man, would be pleased to bless and to use his servant still further in connection with the precautions to be taken to avert the severity of the famine

predicted. Pharaoh was possessed of autocratic power, and was at liberty to exalt whom he would to authority in his kingdom, and very wisely he concluded that none could be more safe to trust than the one whom the Almighty trusted and made his friend;--the one to whom and through whom he revealed the secrets of knowledge. There is a lesson of wisdom here for the Lord's people and for all--to the effect that although the Lord's people may not be perfect, it is safer, in an emergency, to trust those whom the Lord has trusted than any others.

Joseph was at once made what we to-day would call Prime Minister of Egypt. He was the representative of Pharaoh, and as such had greater power than any monarch or Prime Minister of Europe, except the Caesar of Russia and the Sultan of Turkey or their representatives. Many have inclined to doubt the possibility of such an exaltation from prison to second place in the throne; but such are not sufficiently familiar with the customs of eastern countries. A story, for instance, is told of the Sultan of Turkey, that one day having a severe toothache, and his usual dentist being absent from the city, his servants were sent to get any dentist they could find. They found one in comparative poverty, clothed him suitably to be presented to the Sultan, who, after he had performed the service, gave him the title and emoluments of Pasha, with both a city and a country residence, wealth, etc. Joseph's experience was not much more extreme than this. Doubtless, though the narrative does not show it, some explanations were offered respecting his previous character as Potiphar's servant, and as the trusty overseer in prison; satisfying Pharaoh's mind that he was an honourable man, worthy of confidence and trust, besides the attestations of divine favour. So there is likely to be in all of our affairs a time of change, in which, if we have been misunderstood and misrepresented, the truth will ultimately be brought forth, as the Lord declares, "He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday." (Psa. 37:6.) We are to wait patiently for the Lord, and to take patiently such experiences as his providences may mark out for us, questioning not the wisdom, the love and the power of him with whom we have to do --of him who has promised that all things shall work for our everlasting welfare, if we abide faithful to him.

Pharaoh's ring was a signet ring. In ancient times royal commands were not signed and sealed, as at present, but sealed only, the monarch having a peculiar seal which, wherever it went, was recognized as his, and to have counterfeited which would have been gross felony, punishable with death. It was this seal that was given to Joseph, that by and through the authority expressed in it he might issue such commands as he pleased in respect to the accumulation and building of granaries and storing in the same part of the surplus crop of the seven years of plenty. The honour and distinction of Joseph as next to Pharaoh seems well to illustrate the glorious exaltation of our Lord Jesus (in which the church, as his body, will soon share). Our Lord was tested, yet notwithstanding his faithfulness he went into the great prison-house of death; on the third day was delivered and raised up to power and great glory, and to be next to Jehovah God in the throne of the universe. The divine signet was given to him, and the proclamation was that "All men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father," and that nothing should be done except at his command--that all power in heaven and in earth was committed unto him. (John 5:23; Matt. 28:18.) The faithful members of the elect body of Christ, the Church, the overcomers, must also be tried in various ways, and for righteousness' sake must suffer in the present time, be misunderstood, misrepresented, etc. These also must go into the prison-house of death, and be there in parts of three great days (thousand-year days), a part of the fifth thousand, all of the sixth thousand, and early in the seventh

thousand years, or third thousand-year day, their resurrection is due; that they may become joint-heirs with Christ their Lord and Head, in the glorious things of the Kingdom. All this was well marked by the parts of three years which Joseph spent in prison, and his subsequent exaltation.

The meaning of the new, Egyptian, name given to Joseph is rather in dispute, Canon Cooke claiming that it means "Bread of Life." It was appropriate in view of the great work which Joseph accomplished --the accumulation of a great store of wheat during the years of plenty,--sufficient to supply the necessities of the whole people during the seven years of famine. In this respect again we are reminded of Christ, who called himself the "Bread of Life." We are reminded, too, that it was through a work which he accomplished that the living bread is provided, for the whole world of mankind typified by the Egyptians; and that through him also the bread of life comes to his brethren, typified by Joseph's brethren and Jacob. As there was no life for all the people there except through Joseph and his work, and as Joseph did his work as the agent or representative of Pharaoh, so we see, as an anti-type, that there is no life for anyone of the world except in and through Christ Jesus our Lord, and that his work is accomplished in the name of, and as the representative of our Heavenly Father, the supreme ruler of the universe.

Some are always ready to make objection and to find fault, rather than to make reasonable explanations, and some such object to Joseph's course in collecting one-fifth of the harvest of the plentiful years, and using it later on to strengthen the authority of Pharaoh and his control over all the people of his realm. We might say that even the one-fifth of the crop increase might not be considered an unreasonable tax, as it is the usual amount of rental charged in that vicinity to-day, and even more than that is frequently charged here and elsewhere in civilized countries; but we do not know that the one-fifth was exacted from the people as a tax. We do not know that Pharaoh's purse and bank account were not drawn upon for the purpose of this storage-wheat at the low price which would prevail during a period of such great surplus. We shall presume the latter, in the absence of any information to the contrary; and as for using this to strengthen the authority of the throne, and the contrariness of this from all democratic ideas, we have nothing to say except that it remains to be proven that a republican form of government is in all respects the best for fallen humanity. The Lord does not propose as a remedy for present ills, social, political, moral, etc., to introduce a Millennium along the lines of a republic; but he does propose its introduction along the lines of a monarchy-- an absolute monarchy, in which his Son, who redeemed the world, will reign to bless the world by the exercise of autocratic power; for the subjugation of evil; for the bringing of all mankind into full appreciation of the principles of righteousness, and, so far as they will, into full accord with the great supreme ruler, Jehovah--that they shall be his subjects forever, as the people of Egypt typically became the perpetual servants of Pharaoh.

As Pharaoh gave to Joseph a wife, named Asenath (signifying "Favour"), and she became Joseph's associate in honour and dignity, and co-labourer and helpmate with him in his work of blessing Egypt, so Jehovah God proposes a bride for his exalted Son, our Lord, and she also will be a favourite. It has required all of this Gospel age for her betrothal and preparation for the marriage, and the time is now nigh at hand when she shall be brought near to the King, as the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, adorned in the glorious linen robe of her Lord, fitly embroidered with the elements of character which he can approve.-- `Psa. 45:13,14`.

Joseph's head was not turned by the prosperity which came to him; he showed himself worthy of it-- that he had profited by previous experiences, so as to know how to use the prosperity wisely. He was not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit; and seeing that the Lord had opened the way before him we find him immediately taking steps to carry out his mission. His first move was to travel throughout the lengths and breadths of Egypt, to determine the most eligible sites for the building of granaries, or storehouses; and the Lord's blessing continued with him and prospered him in the work thus given him to do. So it should be with us; in whatever department of the Lord's service he is pleased to open the door of opportunity to us, we should enter it promptly and with energy--with zeal for him and for the cause to which he has called us. This is one condition of our acceptableness with him. If we are slothful, inattentive to opportunities, undoubtedly they will be removed from us, and given to others, for the Lord is abundantly able to raise up one or another to serve his cause without interfering with, or overruling our free moral agency. Let us more and more appreciate what a privilege we enjoy in being co-labourers together with God, and especially in connection with this great service which our Lord and Master Jesus is executing, and to fellowship in which we have been called, as his bride and joint-heir.

They that honour God he will honour, in his own way; and his way will always be found eventually to be the best way. We not only are to honour the Lord by word of mouth, but especially are we to show forth his praises in the affairs of life--in connection with home duties, business duties, service of the truth: in all things we are to glorify him in our bodies and spirits which are his; and those who thus do shall be blessed indeed of the Lord and be used of him. The slightest service here permitted us is an honour indeed, and faithfulness in these slight services of the present time are eventually to be blessed and rewarded with the greater and grander service of the Kingdom.

R3978

**THEM THAT HONOR ME I WILL HONOR
GENESIS 41:38-49**

Golden Text:--"If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God."--James 1:5.

JOSEPH'S three years' experience as a prisoner, most of it as the superintendent of the prison, undoubtedly brought to him a rich experience of patience and sympathy, and tended to confirm and deepen those beautiful elements of his character manifested in his boyhood. The Lord had him in training for a great work: not only was it appropriate that his character should be developed, but also that his faith should be tested and made very strong. We have seen that although he trusted the Lord implicitly, this did not hinder him from appealing to Pharaoh's butler, whose dream he interpreted favourably, asking him that when restored to the king's favour he would remember Joseph's kindness to him as a prisoner and speak a word in his interest to secure his liberty. Perhaps he expected much from this man, who certainly would have had many opportunities for requiting his kindness, yet two years rolled around without relief--two years in which, nevertheless, Joseph maintained his confidence in the Lord and waited patiently for the out workings of his plan.

There could be no better illustration than this for the proper course of all who belong to the New Creation. In a special sense all of our interests are the Lord's, because we have presented ourselves to him wholly, unreservedly, and have been accepted as members of the body of Christ. It is for such to remember the Master's words, "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of," "The Father himself loveth you," "No man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand," "All things shall work together for good to them that love God." While, therefore, it is proper for us to make use of any and every reasonable means for the securing of what we consider to be our best interests, we are not to rely upon these but upon the Lord, and to wait patiently for his time and his way for our deliverance from every evil condition.

WAIT PATIENTLY FOR HIM

The Lord's time and method for delivering Joseph from the prison transcended all of Joseph's expectations; and lifted him from the prison to the palace of the greatest nation of that time. It came about eventually through the mediation of the butler, but to the latter's shame it was not because of his appreciation or thoughtfulness. Pharaoh had two dreams which impressed his mind deeply, and he earnestly sought the interpretation of them. He dreamed of seeing seven cows come up out of the river Nile, very fat, and feed upon luxuriant grass of the river side; next he saw seven lean cows come up out of the river, and they devoured the seven fat ones, yet seemed none the fatter themselves. This dream was followed by another in which the king saw a stalk of Egyptian wheat, known as compound wheat; its top was exceedingly large, dividing into seven distinct branches or spikes, indicating a most prolific yield; and following it came up another stalk, with seven thin ears or branches, of the kind common to a time of famine, when lack of moisture and a southeast wind would injure the crop and make it worthless. This last stalk of seven branches devoured the first one.

We are to remember that the Lord in those ancient times gave important dreams not only to some of his own people, as in the case of Joseph, Daniel and others, but also sometimes to the heathen; for instance, to Nebuchadnezzar a dream of the golden image, and again of the fruitful tree, and in the present instance Pharaoh's dreams. We are not to wonder, then, that the king of Egypt desired assistance in the interpretation of his dreams and called for it of the wise men of his court, who, however, were unable to offer any satisfactory solution. After we have Joseph's interpretation the whole matter seems so simple and plain that we wonder that the wise men and priests had not guessed it: but thus it is with our wisdom; it seems simple after we have it, understand it and appreciate it. Thus it is, too, with the inventions of our day. We wonder why they were not thought of centuries ago.

We are sure that the world is not inclined to give proper credit for wisdom to the great Revealer of secrets, and we are sure, too, that the majority of Christian people are not sufficiently inclined to honour God in respect to such matters. Could the world but realize what we see from the Scriptures--namely, that the present activity of thought along the lines of invention are of divine prearrangement as elements of the "Day of God's Preparation" for the Millennial Kingdom--how it would prick its bubble of pride in our present-day wisdom; how it would show us most effectively that all wisdom comes from above, and that we might be groping almost as blindly as our ancestors were it not that the Lord's due time has come for lifting the veil and helping us to develop the forces of nature as a preparation, not only for the

Kingdom, but also a preparation for the great time of trouble by which it will be introduced.

IN ALL THY WAYS ACKNOWLEDGE HIM

When the wise men of Egypt were unable to interpret Pharaoh's dream, his butler naturally enough called to mind his own dream and how accurately it had been interpreted by the kind and sympathizing Joseph, and his own promise to do something for the interpreter, and his neglect until this time. Perhaps he was not entirely to blame; he could only be useful to Joseph when God's time for favouring the latter had come. When Pharaoh heard the story of the wonderful interpretation of the dreams of his butler and baker he sent with haste to the prison, eager to know the meaning of his own dreams. Here we have a further test of Joseph's character. Let us notice carefully how he demeaned himself in the presence of the king. Was he haughty, boastful, self-assertive? Did he throw around himself a mystery and seem to call from the recesses of his mind some deep wisdom? Not so. He was the very personification of modesty, and when the king expressed the hope that he could interpret his dreams he answered, "It is not of me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer."

Here we have one of the secrets of the greatness of Joseph: he honoured God, and was therefore of the kind whom God is pleased eventually to honour and exalt. How the Scriptures bear out this thought! Mark our Master's words, "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, he that exalteth himself shall be abased." (Luke 14:11.) Mark the Apostle's words, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." (1 Pet. 5:6.) O, that we all might have this lesson deeply impressed upon our hearts and minds, so that with us it will be true, as with Joseph, in harmony with the instruction, "In all thy ways acknowledge him."--Prov. 3:6.

While such an acknowledgment of the Lord is proper in all the affairs of life, it certainly is especially appropriate in connection with the study of the divine Word and any attempt to give an interpretation thereof. Let none of us speak as of ourselves, nor appropriate wisdom to ourselves, but rather, with hearts full of gratitude to the Lord for blessings received, let us acknowledge him and his Word and his arrangements in connection with his Truth. Especially is this appropriate in those who occupy positions of responsibility in the Church--whom the holy Spirit has made overseers to "feed the flock of Christ." To whatever extent self-seeking is indulged, to whatever extent the honour of men is craved, the Lord as the fountain of wisdom and the channels which he uses in dispensing his Truth are ignored or belittled by any of us, to that extent we may be sure we are in a dangerous situation and not likely to make real progress in the good way.

SEIZING FAVORABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Pharaoh related his dreams, and after hearing them Joseph promptly gave the interpretation and explained that the two dreams were one--that they taught the same lesson: that thus the Lord had indicated to Pharaoh that there would be seven years of very bountiful harvests which would be followed by seven years of drought and famine, in which all the surplus of the first seven years would be necessary for the preservation of the lives of the people. A lighter-headed man than Joseph, a man who felt that in interpreting the dream he had confounded the wise men of Egypt, had done a wonderful thing, would have been so overwhelmed with the sense of his own

importance that he doubtless would have stood there and received the king's thanks, and have passed out a free man, to be noted by the people as the wise man.

The humility of Joseph was not merely assumed: his crediting of the wisdom to the Lord was the genuine sentiment of his heart, so that he did not feel thus elated when he had delivered the Lord's message, but with coolness and self-possession he proceeded to suggest to the king what might be the proper steps to be taken so that the dream might indeed prove a blessing. He said, "Let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years; and let them gather all the fruit of those seven years as the property of Pharaoh, to be kept in store in cities for use in the seven years of famine that will follow." We cannot suppose that Joseph had the slightest suspicion that he would be the one appointed to this work. It would be a most unnatural expectation that Pharaoh would take from the prison a man of foreign birth and exalt him to a station above the other officers of his empire. Yet this is just what Pharaoh did, and it is here that our lesson proper commences.

COULD WE CHOOSE MORE WISELY THAN GOD?

Addressing his court officers Pharaoh said, Could we find such another one as this Joseph, in whom is the Spirit of God, to be at the head of this great work of preparing for the years of famine of which God has thus forewarned us? Not waiting to have the consent of the officers of his court, but after the manner of the time as an autocrat, he decided the question and said to Joseph, "Forasmuch as God has showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: thou shall be over my house [kingdom], and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt."

So thrilling a transition from slavery and the dungeon to the governorship of the greatest country of the world, and honour and distinction and power next to those of the king, outrivals the pen of fiction in the most attractive novels. It seems so wonderful that it is difficult to believe its truthfulness. Hence it is well for us to remember that while such transitions would not be possible under the democratic conditions of our day and country, they were not out of harmony with the conditions of their time and place. For instance, we know that Daniel was a Hebrew captive and slave, and yet that he was chosen by Nebuchadnezzar to be one of the rulers of the empire of Babylon. We remember also that Daniel was brought to the King's notice in a very similar manner, namely, by the interpretation of a dream. Professor Sayce says, "It was not an unheard-of thing for a Syrian to be thus raised to the highest offices of the Egyptian State, and in the days of Hyksos' dominion it was naturally easier than when a dynasty of purely native origin was on the throne....For many centuries during the Mohammedan age none but a slave could govern Egypt." We are also reminded that in 1852 the prime minister of Persia, the second in rank in the kingdom but first in power, was the son of a donkey driver; and that the Sultan of Turkey once rewarded a poor dentist who relieved him of pain by making him a peer of the realm.

The exaltation of Joseph from the condition of a slave and from a dungeon to be the second person of power in the world suggests to us further the typical character of Joseph's life. Did not our Lord Jesus take a bondsman's form? and did he not enter the great prison-house of death? and was he not suddenly raised up to the throne--to be next to the Father, the Governor of the universe? And did not the experiences of Jesus under God's providence have to do with preparing him for his great work of the future, the blessing of the whole world? And as Joseph saved the lives of the people

of Egypt, will not the antitypical Joseph save the lives of the world? While thinking along these lines let us remember, too, how we are invited to be members of the body of Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together. (Rom. 8:17.) With this thought in our minds, the trials, the difficulties, the sufferings of this present time, its afflictions, disappointments, may all be endured with cheerfulness if we have the proper faith--knowing that all things shall work together for good to them that love God, to the called ones according to his purpose.

UNTO HIM EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW

When the time came for King Pharaoh to introduce the new governor or prime minister of the empire to the people he first provided for him suitable apparel, to indicate the rank; next, the second state chariot, and, third, that he should be escorted in parade before the people by criers, who should announce his rank and call upon the people to bow the knee--to acknowledge him as the king's representative. How this reminds us of the Apostle's words respecting our Lord Jesus and his high exaltation after his trials were concluded. Paul says, "Wherefore God hath also highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth." (Phil. 2:9,10.) And while we contemplate this high exaltation of the Master let us not forget that his Bride is to be joint-heir with him in all of his glory, honour and immortality, and that the privilege of becoming members of the Bride class belongs to the "called, chosen, faithful," the "very elect" of this Gospel age.

If we could but have this in mind continually, what manner of persons would we be in all holy conversation and godliness--how trifling all earthly pleasures and sorrows, all riches and poverty, all weakness and debasement would seem to us! so intense would we be in our desire to make our calling and election sure to those exceeding great and precious promises. Pharaoh gave Joseph a new name, the meaning of which is suggested to be something like-- Deliverer from death by the bread of life. We remember how our dear Redeemer said of himself, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." God provided in Jesus the bread of life, by which the whole world may be saved eventually from Adamic death if they but eat of the divine Word, appropriate its lessons and experiences, under the ministry and discipline of the great Redeemer during his glorious Kingdom. And all this was considerably illustrated in Joseph's course as the governor of Egypt.

DID JOSEPH ENSLAVE THE EGYPTIANS?

Some have severely criticised Joseph's course in dealing with the people on this occasion, but we find no criticism of it in the Scriptures. His first work was to journey throughout the entire land of Egypt, select suitable sites as granaries, and to give contracts for the building of these. Then throughout the seven years of bountiful harvests he first of all collected from the people their usual tax of one-fifth of the product for the king. Additionally he bought from the people with the king's money all the surplus grain they could spare and thus laid up vast stores of wheat. When the years of drought and famine came the people in turn were glad to buy from the government the very same grain that they had previously sold. We have no intimation that an exorbitant price was charged for the wheat, no intimation that advantage was taken of the people.

But after the people had spent their money still the famine prevailed, and Joseph, the governor, purchased their cattle and all the people had, which thus became

the property of the king. This was not an ideal condition according to our conception of matters, because it left too much of a centralization of power and authority in the hands of an autocrat; but if we could imagine divinely appointed and divinely guided and divinely willed kings and priests in the world, such an autocratic power would be one of the very greatest blessings imaginable to all the people. Indeed we know through the Scriptures that this will practically be the condition of affairs that will prevail during the Millennial age--that the world will not be asked to vote for its rulers and to determine its laws, but simply be required to obey the great Governor of divine appointment, unto whom every knee must bow and every tongue confess to the glory of God.

Here, then, in Joseph we see another illustration or type of the Christ of glory and the manner in which he will bless the world. Our Redeemer has already laid up in store a complete provision of the bread of life, sufficient for every member of our race. In him was life, and he gave it on our behalf. We who are now accepted as his members, and who at once receive this life by faith when we accept him, and will receive it actually in the First Resurrection, are the predecessors of the world in the matter of these blessings. Only the little flock is now being developed, now being fed, now passing from death unto life, through accepting the bread from heaven--only the Bride and the virgins, her companions. The great work which God has in mind, and for which he has appointed our Redeemer, is the work of saving the world, and the time and means for this salvation of the world is the Millennial age, the reign of the Kingdom of heaven amongst men.

THE BREAD FROM HEAVEN

During the Millennium the great Provider of the Bread of life and his associated Bride will dispense to the world, through the agency of the ancient worthies, the Bread of life as they will need it and be able to appreciate it. Day by day and year by year, during all that time, the world must bow the knee to the great Ruler and Representative of Jehovah. And during all that time they will be required to give up one thing after another for the attainment of the eternal life, until finally, at the end of the Millennial age, all who remain--not cut off in the Second Death--shall have given their property, their all, including themselves, in exchange for the eternal life represented by this living Bread that came from heaven, of which if a man eat he shall never die.

The abundance of corn gathered by Joseph typically assures us of the abundance of God's provision for granting eternal life to every member of the human family willing to receive it from the Son upon the terms of loving obedience to the extent of full surrender. While the surrender of the will and of all that we possess to a fellow-mortal would be a very dangerous matter indeed, against which we should properly strive, it is not so as respects the Lord. He is the grand exception. To give ourselves wholly and unreservedly to him is to bring to each of us, through his blessing, the peace of God which passeth all understanding, and to have him mould and fashion our characters with all our interests of life to our highest welfare and his glory. What a blessed prospect then is before the world! and how we who by faith eat of this Bread in advance, and participate with the antitypical Joseph in all of his trials and sufferings for righteousness' sake, may rejoice in our privilege.

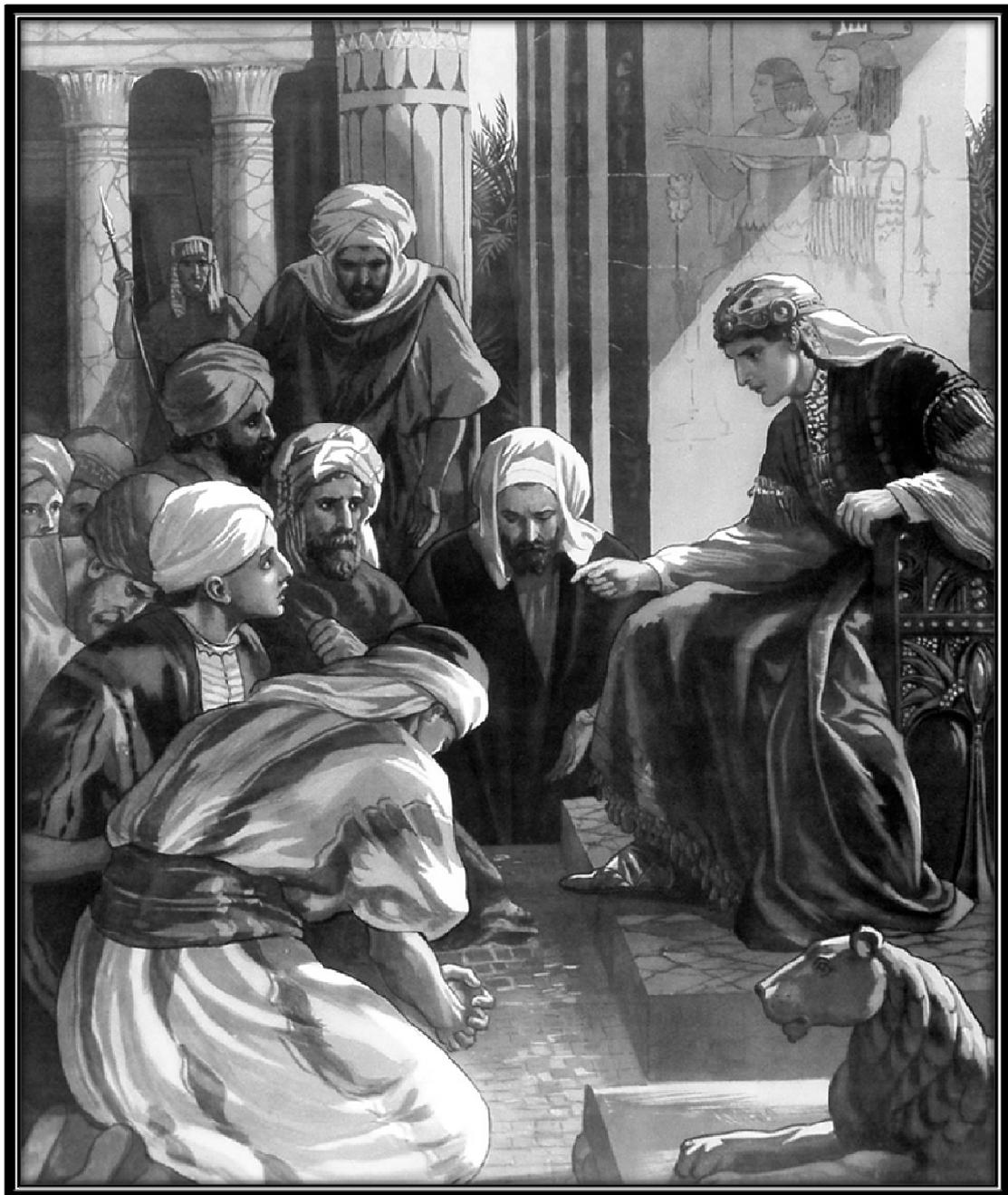
IF ANY MAN LACK WISDOM LET HIM ASK

Our Golden Text should not be forgotten here. Surely we all lack wisdom, and we appreciate our lack the more as we come to clearly and yet more clearly appreciate

the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of God's loving provision for us in Christ. Once life was to us a maze, like as to the remainder of the world,--a round of duties and responsibilities for which we could see no adequate result or reward. We are born, we eat, we drink, we sleep, we learn in the school, we labour, and, to a greater or less extent, we enjoy our life of mingled labour, suffering and pleasure, but appreciate not the purpose of all these. Now, with increasing wisdom from on high, some of us see with the eyes of our understanding the great divine plan of the ages, and the divine purpose and loving kindness toward us in Christ Jesus, and that we shall be heirs of God and joint-heirs with our Redeemer if so be we suffer with him. Seeing this has changed the entire current of life for us. Now, indeed, to be living is sublime--full of interest, full of importance. The days, hours, go swiftly by, and we feel them none too many for the grand purposes of God which we see are being accomplished in us and for us, and with which we are in fullest accord and sympathy. Still, we lack wisdom, and the more we gain the more we see we still lack. We need, therefore, to continually go to the fountain of all grace and wisdom and truth, that we may profitably use each experience of life as it comes to us, to the intent that ultimately we may come off conquerors--yea, more than conquerors--through him who loved us and bought us with his precious blood.--`Rom. 8:37`.

PART - 3

JOSEPH FORGIVING HIS BRETHREN



JOSEPH THE MERCIFUL GENESIS 45:1-15

"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."--Rom. 12:21.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE in the affairs of men is the essence of this lesson. Joseph was now thirty-nine years of age, having been next to Pharaoh in the throne of Egypt for nine years. The seven years of plenty were in the past; the granaries of Egypt were full with enough to spare, and two years of the predicted famine were already past. It would seem that Joseph had made no attempt to communicate with his father and brethren; first, probably because the methods of communication at that time were limited, but more particularly, we opine, because he had for some years been realizing that divine providence was shaping his affairs. He remembered his early dreams, and could see that they were now in a fair way of fulfilment. He would leave to divine supervision this matter, which was evidently beyond his control anyway. He no doubt thought of the famine, and how it would affect Palestine, and thus the interests of his father and brethren, their households, flocks and herds. He no doubt expected that as other people from the vicinity were coming to Egypt to buy grain, so quite probably eventually the Hebrews would come also; and they were forced to come by the close of the second year of the famine.

We may surmise that some law prohibited the sale of grain to foreigners, except by the chief ruler's permission, and that thus Joseph's brethren were obliged to come before him to explain. This thought is sustained by the fact that Joseph, wishing to try his brethren, first cast them into prison as spies--as though they were emissaries of a foreign power; which perceived the wealth of Egypt in food, and was meditating an attack upon the country. This gave Joseph the opportunity of inquiring minutely respecting the home conditions of his brethren, concerning his father and Benjamin, his younger brother, who was not with the brethren. Finally he gave them the opportunity of proving the truth of their statements, holding Simeon as a ransom until they would come again and bring Benjamin with them, knowing full well that they would be obliged to do this, because the famine would continue. These experiences proved a valuable lesson to the ten brethren, respecting the difficulties in which they were, and called to mind their past wrong conduct in respect to Joseph, for they accepted their present difficulties as retribution. "They said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear, therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child;--and ye would not hear? Therefore behold also his blood is required. And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter."

Joseph was not hard-hearted, but wise in his treatment of his brethren. Most evidently not a solitary act was inspired by vindictiveness. He was evidently taking God's view of matters; viz., that it is proper that a certain amount of retribution shall come upon evil-doers, so as to impress upon them the more thoroughly the sinfulness of sin. Thus parents and guardians of children should not permit their kindness and sympathy to hinder a reasonable, moderate punishment of wrong-doing. Nevertheless, pity and love should be back of all, as it was in Joseph's case; merely planning for the better opportunity and the larger amount of blessing in due time.

When their grain was exhausted, and want was staring them in the face, Jacob finally consented to let Benjamin go with his brethren for the second purchase of grain; not, however, until Judah had become pledge for Benjamin, that he would not return to his home or family unless Benjamin also returned. The coming of the brethren to Joseph's house a second time, with the proof of the genuineness of their original story, was sufficient ground for their entertainment most graciously, and for the liberation of Simeon; --the whole company, to their surprise, being invited to dine with the governor, Joseph. They were surprised, too, that by some preconcerted arrangement they were seated at the table in the order of their ages; and further astonished that their younger brother, Benjamin, received five portions, as an evidence of special regard of the governor. They were rejoiced, undoubtedly, at the good fortune that had overtaken them, and making ready started on their homeward journey, doubtless thinking to themselves--We thought that our hardships of the previous time were probably in the nature of retributions, and that God's hand was in it, but after all, it seems that it was merely a natural thing that we should be taken for spies. Now, behold, we are prospered.

But they had not gone far until they were overtaken by the governor's agents, who represented that a theft had been committed, that the governor's valuable silver mug, called by the Egyptians, "Cup of Divination," was missing. They protested their innocence, that they were not that kind of men, and suggested that they be searched thoroughly. Examination was made of the grain sacks of one after another, until finally the cup was found in Benjamin's sack, and the whole company, previously elated, now returned prisoners to the governor of Egypt, whose hospitalities they had so recently enjoyed, and apparently had so poorly requited. Perhaps they began to think about the Joseph matter again, and to say to themselves, The evil that we thought was past is still pursuing us. It was a good lesson undoubtedly, helping to impress upon their minds, not only the value of honesty, but also the thought that although the wheels of justice grind sometimes slowly, they grind surely and very fine.

Benjamin, with the rest, denied that he had stolen the cup, and whether the brothers believed him or not, they would not lay special blame upon him, but generously shared it as a whole company. Judah, speaking for them, said, "What shall we say unto my Lord? What shall we speak, or how shall we clear ourselves? God has found out the iniquities of thy servants. Behold, we are my Lord's servants, both we and he also with whom the cup was found." They did not explain to Joseph the nature of their iniquity, though this evidently was in their minds. Joseph, however, wishing to see to what extent they had still the same evil, jealous disposition which they manifested toward him, proposed to let the others go free and merely to hold Benjamin, as the slave. The ruse was successful, and developed the fact that the brethren had learned lessons and formed characters in the interim which made them now more sympathetic one for another, and for their father. Their wrong course in Joseph's case had not been persisted in, but had been repented of. Judah explained the whole situation to Joseph through the interpreter, and so vividly did he picture Jacob's love for Benjamin, and his sorrow at the supposed death of Joseph, and the interest of the whole family in their father, that Joseph could no longer refrain --could no longer restrain his emotions. He felt that the time had now come to reveal himself to his brethren, and in order that they might feel the less embarrassed under the circumstances he ordered all the Egyptians from the room, and then explained briefly and sympathetically that he himself was their brother Joseph.

What wonder that the brethren were troubled, as they thought probably of how they would be disposed to retaliate were they in his place of power. But Joseph soon convinced them that he had none but kindly feelings for them, that he was merciful, forgiving. The spirit which he exhibited under these circumstances is worthy of emulation, not merely by natural men, but also by the "new creatures in Christ Jesus." How often do we find that the Lord's people are narrow in such matters, instead of being broad and generous, loving and forgiving. Joseph now speaking to his brethren in the Hebrew tongue, repeated to them the words, "I am Joseph," and added, "whom ye sold into Egypt," that thus they might recognize him, not only by his speech, but by his knowledge of the facts, that it was really their brother who was before them. But this expression was so gracious, and anger and malice were so absent from his every word and act, that they were inspired with confidence, and at his request drew near to him.

Many Christians would have spoiled the whole effect of this great lesson upon their brethren had they been in Joseph's place, by poor judgment, by reading the brethren a lecture;--by telling them what they already knew about the wrong of their conduct, about how now they were in his power, and how he could evil entreat them, but would not. Joseph was too wise and too merciful to take such a course. He took the contrary one, saying, "Be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither." It seems wonderful indeed that a natural man could and would have so much of the spirit of God as is here manifested, and yet we know that Joseph was only a natural man--the holy spirit not having been poured out upon any of our race until Pentecost. It gives also a suggestion respecting the breadth of character of the ancients, quite in contradiction of the theory of evolution, which would claim that at that early period, man being but slightly above the monkey, would have coarse and brutish sentiments.

Joseph preached a great sermon to his brethren in few words, when he said, "God did send me before you to preserve life"--he thus overruled your wrong course, and has brought out of it a blessing. He gave his brethren credit for ability to understand such things. That the Lord overruled their course for good, did not prove that their course was a good or proper course; it merely proved the divine power and the divine wisdom and divine providence, that was over Joseph and over all the house of Jacob, causing all things, even the evil thing, to work out for good, according to the divine plan. How great and how lasting a lesson came to Joseph's brethren through their experiences, and through this his short sermon we cannot tell; but there is a great lesson here for all of God's people today along the line of mercy toward those who deliberately sin against us; and also along the line of noting, discerning and referring to divine providence in connection with our affairs. We are not only to note divine providences, but we are to give credit for them, as it is written, "In all thy ways acknowledge him." `Prov. 3:6`.

Joseph could have permitted his experiences to have developed a great deal of personal pride. He might have reasoned to himself, as some would have reasoned, that he was merely lucky, or that he was naturally bright, attractive, smart, and that this was the secret of his success; that this was the reason his father loved him specially; that this was the reason, when sold for a slave, he was bought by a good master in affluent circumstances; that this personal brilliancy was the cause of his rise in Potiphar's house to eminence; that the same effected his rise to a position of authority in the prison; that his keenness of intellect had enabled him to interpret the dreams; and that in general he stood head and shoulders above other men; and that others realized this, and hence he had come by his exaltation in a natural way. But had he

thus been heady and high-minded, and self-conceited, we may be sure that it would have led to a fall--that God would not have continued to bless, prosper and advance him. We may be sure, too, that had he thus developed a spirit of pride and self-conceit, his conduct with his brethren would have been very different from what it was. He would have been crowing over them, and mistreating them in order to convince them of his power, and thus would have shown himself to be a very much smaller man than his proper course shows him to have been. He was a great man, and his greatness was manifested, not merely in his financial management of the kingdom of Egypt, but especially manifested in his reliance upon God, his realization that the divine promise and blessing, through his great-grandfather, Abraham, his grandfather, Isaac, and his father, Jacob, was resting upon him in some manner, and that because of this divine favour things were working as they were.

The spiritual seed of Abraham may draw valuable lessons from this narrative. If it was appropriate that Joseph should acknowledge the Lord as the giver of all his blessings, which were all of an earthly and temporal kind, how much more should the spiritual Seed of Abraham acknowledge the spiritual blessings received at the Father's hand,--and recognize in every mercy and favour opportunities of service; that it is the hand of providence. Surely these should always be on the alert, to realize and to confess,--"It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." But on the contrary, we are sorry at times to find some of God's spiritual children inclined to be puffed up, and to speak of God's favour, the knowledge of the truth which they have received of the Lord, as though it were something of their own achievement; --as though some honour were due them, as the inventors of the divine plan.

Again, the spiritual Israelite should be even more merciful than Joseph. If he could see that the persecutions he receives, from his brethren and others, are merely incidents of divine providence-- which the Lord is using to prepare him for coming blessings and exaltation, should not the spiritual Israelite take his disappointments as God's appointments? And should he not with a clearer eye of faith, be the better able to see that many of his spiritual advancements have come as a result of persecutions from the world and from false brethren? And should he not, like Joseph, look with great complacency upon all these various agencies which God has been pleased to use in spiritually uplifting him, to perfect him as a "new creature," an heir of God, a joint-heir with Jesus Christ, his Lord? He surely should. And the only things which can hinder us from seeing that our advancement is of the Lord, and not of ourselves, will be a lack of humility, and a lack of trust in divine providence; and the only things which could hinder us from feeling patient forbearance and kindly sympathy and love for those who have despitefully used and persecuted us, would be a lack of the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of mercy, and a failure to see properly that whatever agencies God may use in our spiritual up building are to be appreciated and sympathized with;--whether they be brethren or of the world-- Egyptians.

Then Joseph explained the providence of God, the years of plenty and the years of famine, and how God had been supervising the entire matter, and that this was his means of preserving Abraham's posterity, concluding, "So now, it was not you that sent me hither, but God." We are not to give credit to the evil agencies through which we have received blessings, otherwise we might soon be disposed to call evil good; but we are to give full credit to God, because that which was intended to be evil, and which was evil of itself, divine wisdom, so far above the earthly plane, was able to overrule for our good. It is as we learn the lesson of God's inherent goodness--as we learn to respect his wisdom, love and power that our faith grows stronger and stronger, until we are able to trust the Lord, not only in things which we

can see are working out for our good, but able to trust him also in respect to things which seem entirely dark and out of which apparently no good can come; thus we trust him where we cannot trace him. And this is faith; and faith is a gift of God in that it is cultivated to acceptable development by the Lord's gracious promises, rightly received, appreciated and acted upon.

While Joseph had patiently waited for the Lord's time to come, and for twenty years had not seen his father's face, having now witnessed the fulfilment of his first dream, the bowing of his brother's sheaves to his sheaf, he realized that the Lord's time had about come for him again to see his father, when the second dream would be fulfilled. And whereas he was all patience before, now he was all energy and haste, because the time was come, and so he said to his brethren, "Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt. Come down unto me; tarry not." He impressed upon his brethren the glories of his position, not by way of boast or pride, but by way of assuring them of his authority and power to care for them, and so that they might fully assure their father Jacob that his caution might not hinder him from taking advantage of the goodly land of Goshen, now put at their disposal. His brethren and father were not invited to come and share in his throne and regal power, but were invited to come and partake of all the blessings flowing there from. Just so during the Millennial age, after the Christ, Head and Body, represented in Joseph shall be in the throne of glory and of power--in the heavenly Father's throne--when the Kingdom of God shall be established in the earth, all who feel a famine, a hunger, for the true bread of heaven, for eternal life, will be invited to come and receive abundantly of it. None, however, of the earthly class will be invited to share in the Kingdom honours, for the Kingdom class will be complete. But they will be invited to come and receive the blessings of the Kingdom, mental, moral and physical, health and strength, under the favour of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

The parting of Joseph and his brethren was an affecting one; they now understood the meaning of their previous experiences, including the cup found in Benjamin's sack; they saw that these matters all were leading up to the present manifestation to them of the love and sympathy of Joseph, and now, as expressing his special love for Benjamin he kissed him first, weeping tears of joy and recognition, and then did to all the others similarly, and sent them on their way. There is power in affection, in love; but it is necessary that the loving affection be manifested, ere that power can be felt. A difficulty with many parents, husbands, wives, children, is that they do not manifest all the affection which they feel. Pride or fear or some other thing hinders, restrains them, from being as frank with each other as they should be. Joseph's example here is worthy of emulation. He was the wronged one; he was the one in power; he was the one who should have the dignity, and he, therefore, was the one who could best afford to humble himself, and to kiss and make an ad over his brethren. We may be sure that they appreciated it; that such a manifestation of affection on the part of the highly exalted brother touched a tender spot in their hearts, and doubtless worked good for them to the remainder of their lives. And so we may find it with our friends and relatives, that a manifestation of our love and kind feeling toward them will not only be reciprocated, but will do them good; and that our affection restrained of expression will leave an icy coldness, which nothing else will remove, and that such coldness will affect not only them but ourselves also unfavourably--sapping all of life's joy-springs.

Let us remember, in this connection, the words of our text, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Joseph exemplified this advice. He not only did

not permit the evil course of his brethren to overcome him, and make him evil and bitter, but he overcame their evil tendencies, characters and dispositions by his love, his mercy, his kindness, his generosity,--affecting them favourably, no doubt, for the remainder of their days. Such a course is much more incumbent upon us than upon Joseph. He did it spontaneously; we have had the example and precepts of our Lord and his Apostles, and, as well, the begetting of the spirit of holiness. "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy living and God-likeness?"

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BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL
GENESIS 45:1-15

Golden Text:--"Be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."--Eph. 4:32.

THE climax of Joseph's story is reached in this lesson. Truly no one can read the simple narrative in the Bible and not be blessed by it. The present lesson dates twenty-two years after Joseph came into Egypt a slave. Seven years of bountiful harvests had passed, and the second year of the famine seven had come. If we are inclined to wonder why in all those twenty-two years Joseph had not communicated with his aged father, remembering especially that he had plenty of opportunity for so doing after he became governor of Egypt, let us remember also how particularly his affairs were guided of the Lord, and that quite possibly in this matter he was acting under divine direction. He evidently was expecting his brethren, knowing that the drought and consequently the famine extended to Palestine and over a wide range of country. Through trusted servants a watch was evidently kept for the Hebrews, anticipating that the famine would drive them to Egypt for supplies. Thus on the arrival of the ten sons of Jacob Joseph was immediately apprised of the fact. They were arrested and brought before him, treated with suspicion and accused of being spies, and put into prison for three days.

Joseph, the governor, addressed them through an interpreter, that he might the more thoroughly conceal himself, and that they might be more frank in their utterances in his presence. He interviewed them after they had spent three days in prison, and heard their admissions the one to the other that their adversity in this matter was esteemed as a judgment from the Lord on account of their wrong course toward their brother twenty-two years previous. He noted that they still remembered his cries as they had put him into the pit to die; he perceived that the matter had made a deep impression upon their minds, and that they were now in a different attitude of heart. He kept one of their number as a hostage and gave the others a small amount of food, bidding them return and, as a proof of their story, to bring with them the younger brother whom they had mentioned, assuring them that with this proof of their sincerity they would be privileged to traffic without interruption.

The brethren properly enough associated their experiences in the dungeon with those of Joseph, and evidently took to heart the lesson of their wrong course. Although in a previous lesson we saw that these men with one exception were murderers in their hearts, we will see further in the present lesson a marked change in their characters. This was brought about perhaps partly by their father's grief over the

loss of Joseph, and partly, no doubt, by their own remorse in respect to their wrong doing. Thus an evil deed is not always a precursor of further evil, but sometimes becomes the pivotal or turning point of character. What Christian has not had an experience along this line--that his point of failure, demonstrating his weakness in some particular line of character, has really been to him a valuable lesson, making him the stronger in that particular, the better able to stand future trials and temptations from the same quarter. Thus all of our experiences in life rightly received (even life's stumbling-stones) may prove to be stepping-stones to better things.

TEN VERY CHANGED MEN

On arrival at home their experiences were related to their father Jacob, who now also mourned the loss of Simeon, the hostage, but utterly refused to allow Benjamin to go from him. It was here that Reuben, noting his father's sorrow, offered himself and his children as hostages for the safe return of Benjamin. It was not until the famine pressed them sorely and starvation stared them in the face that Jacob consented to allow Benjamin to go with his brethren to Egypt, upon the assurance of Judah that if anything happened to him he would bear the blame. How evidently these men had learned sympathy from their father during those twenty-two years. Once so indifferent that they brought trouble upon him, they now were willing to pledge their own lives for his comfort. We are to remember that these men were the heads of the tribes of Israel, some of whose children were the most notable in history: for instance Levi was the father of the entire priestly tribe, including Moses and Aaron; Judah was the progenitor of David and Solomon and Jesus our Lord. It was evidently a part of the divine purpose to give these men a great lesson in connection with their father, the famine, etc.--a lesson that not only would be beneficial to themselves but have an influence upon all future time.

Arrived back in Egypt from their father's house, the ten brethren were astonished when they were directed to enter the governor's palace. The money for their previous purchase they had found in their sacks when they emptied them, and this they explained to Joseph's steward, saying that they had brought it back with additional money for the purchase of more wheat. Their trepidation was lest it should be claimed that the money was stolen, the penalty for theft under the Egyptian law being slavery. Joseph's steward gave evidence of having to some extent his master's confidence and some knowledge of his religion, for he answered them kindly, "Peace be unto you: the money returned to you was from the God of your father." He further restored their confidence by bringing Simeon to them at liberty. They washed and prepared for dinner at the governor's house, as they were instructed. What could it all mean?

Farmers, they felt strangely out of place in the palace, and queried why the governor, who had treated them previously as spies, should now treat them so generously. Their astonishment grew momentarily as they noted the peculiarities of the situation: the seats assigned them were in the order of their birth, and when portions were sent from Joseph's separate table they noted that five portions were sent to Benjamin, as indicative of the governor's favour especially upon him. They knew not that the governor, able to understand their tongue, was listening to know whether or not they still were envious, or how they would receive this manifestation of special favour to the younger brother. They stood the test. They showed that their envy was dead, that they rejoiced in their younger brother's favour.

Yet another step of testing was to be taken: the men were allowed to depart with their supplies, but into one of Benjamin's sacks of wheat upon his beast the

steward by direction placed the governor's silver cup, and then, ere the men had gotten far from the city, they were overtaken by the palace guard and accused of dishonourable conduct, rendering evil for good in the theft of the "divining cup" of the governor. They all professed their innocence, and declared that if the cup were to be found not only the one who had it should be a slave but the entire company. The search for the cup began with the eldest and concluded with the youngest, Benjamin, the cup being found in his sack. We can well imagine the dismay upon the brethren; they all returned, although the steward said he wanted only the culprit for his slave. How could they face their father Jacob and tell him of this calamity? Returning to the palace the governor, Joseph, was still there. They prostrated before him, and knowing the futility of protestation as to innocence they spoke of the matter as a calamity and resigned themselves to their fate as bondsmen.

The governor replied, "Not so! we of Egypt are not unjust to take you all for bondsmen for one man's fault. Let the guilty one serve, the rest may go free. Return to your home and your families and take with you your wheat." Then it was that Judah, once hard hearted in respect to his brother Joseph and his father Jacob, addressed the governor a most pathetic plea, which for its simplicity and directness and pathos stands out pre-eminently amongst all the records of history. He detailed to the governor the circumstances connected with the bringing of Benjamin, his father's grief in parting with him, his assurance that it would mean the hastening of his death if anything happened to him, the fact that he, Judah, had become surety for his brother, etc.; then he concludes, "Now, therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad as a bondsman to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brethren, for how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me, lest peradventure I shall see the evil that shall come on my father?"--`Gen. 44:18-34`.

THE SILVER LINING OF THE CLOUD

The final test put upon the brethren by the Lord and by Joseph was met successfully. It was demonstrated that they were changed men, that instead of coldness, indifference and gross brutality, they were tender hearted, sympathetic and willing to suffer one for the other. The time, therefore, had come for the clouds and shadows that had been over them for some time to break away. Joseph, the governor, could refrain himself no longer. He ordered the place cleared of the attendants that he might be alone with his brethren--the matter was too sacred for the eyes of others. The time had come for him to throw off his reserve and reveal himself to them. Alone with them he wept, and his voice shook with emotion as he told them who he was and how their designs against him of twenty-two years before had, under God's providences, been overruled for his good. What wonder that the guilty men trembled now as much or more than ever. What resentment might their brother feel against them? how might he now requite them evil for evil, and send them to the house of bondage or to the dungeon?

But through his tears of joy Joseph spoke graciously to them; and, at first disposed to flee, they gathered to him as he said, "Be not grieved with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God sent me before you to preserve life.... So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God, and he hath made me a life-giver to Pharaoh....Haste ye and go up to my father and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt, come down unto me, tarry not." A more dramatic scene could scarcely be imagined, yet through it all runs the thread of simplicity and honesty, and above all the spirit of love and mercy, which could emanate only from

the one great instructor, God, and could be exemplified only by those who have been near to him and received his instructions.

TENDER HEARTED, FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER

Had Joseph been a saint of this Gospel age, begotten of the holy Spirit and illuminated thereby through the manifold revelations of the divine purpose and character as we have them in the Bible, his conduct would still be worthy of the very highest type of Christian development. But when we think of the circumstances and conditions under which his character was developed, in a heathen land and with but a small revelation of the divine character and plan, we stand amazed. Do we not properly say to ourselves, while studying this lesson, What manner of persons ought we to be considering our great advantages every way? Would we have proven as noble and generous as Joseph under the same circumstances and conditions? If not, why not, except that we have not made the proper use of the lessons provided us in the school of Christ? And we know that unless we do learn these lessons and develop at heart such a character of mercy and generosity we will not be meet for the inheritance of the saints in light--not be acceptable to the Lord as members of the elect, the Bride class.

When sending them home Joseph kissed his brother Benjamin and tarried with him quite a while, the two weeping upon each other's necks. Then came the turn of the other ten brothers. How would he deal with them? Surely he would not manifest the affection of kissing them after the custom of eastern lands, because surely he could not feel toward them a perfect love and good will. But he did kiss every one of them, and since the matter was neither of constraint nor for effect, it evidenced the fact that his heart was full of generosity and loving kindness. "Blessed are the merciful," they are the kind to whom the heavenly Father will be pleased to extend his mercy and his favor. They are the only ones who will be in a proper attitude to receive the great blessing of the Kingdom--others not having developed this character for mercy will be unfit for the exaltation whatever may be their portion.

AM I IN THE PLACE OF GOD?

Our lesson skips over that part of the narrative which relates to the coming of Jacob and his household in wagons sent for them by the governor of Egypt, with the full knowledge and consent of Pharaoh the king, and how they were settled in the land of Goshen and prospered there. By and by the aged Jacob died in the land of Egypt, but was taken for burial back into Palestine. The funeral over, Joseph's brethren were in some trepidation. Joseph's course in rendering so much good in return for so much evil seemed so unnatural that they feared that it was only a temporary matter for their father's sake, and that now since his death they would be entirely out of favour with the governor. They came to Joseph again and, apologizing for the past, asked assurances of his forgiveness, telling him they were the servants of God and that they were quite willing to be Joseph's servants also. Note the noble answer they got:-- "Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now, therefore, fear ye not; I will nourish you and your little ones," and he comforted them, speaking kindly to them.

Generous Joseph! Not a complaint, not a bitter word, only excuses for their villainy. Since the matter had worked out good why should he think evil of the agencies or agents which God had permitted and used? His expression, "Am I in the

place of God?" signifies, Is it for me to judge you or attempt to punish you in any manner? Is it not God alone to whom you have responsibility in this matter? and if you can make the matter right with him it already is right with me, for vengeance belongeth unto the Lord and not to his creatures, all of whom are more or less imperfect in one way or another.

Let us apply this lesson each to himself, not only as respects the brotherhood in the Church of God but also in regard to the dealings with our brethren in the flesh and with our neighbours. What matters it to us whether they meant us evil or meant us good, have we not God's assurance that all things are working together for good to them that love him--to the called ones according to his purpose? And this being the case, why should we have the slightest anger or resentment against the persons or instrumentalities in any way used of the Lord in connection with our affairs. Those who thus trust in the Lord, and they only, are able to properly view and meet the affairs of life, and they alone are able to rejoice in tribulation, in persecution, in suffering for righteousness' sake, because they know, as the Apostle assures us, that all these things are working out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, and that present difficulties and trials are not worthy to be compared with the glories that shall be revealed in us by and by--when we with our dear Redeemer shall sit upon the throne of earth for the blessing of all the families of the earth.

THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION

If the story of Joseph, his sufferings and exaltation to power as the governor of Egypt next to the king, represents the story of Jesus and all those who follow in his footsteps in the narrow way of self sacrifice and suffering, incidental to their exaltation to power in the Kingdom of God under the whole heavens; and if the preparation and afterward the distribution of the wheat, the bread of Egypt, for the saving of the lives of that whole people represents well the blessings and glorious opportunities that are to come to the world of mankind during the Millennial age through the glorified Redeemer, it does not seem amiss to suppose that Joseph's eleven brethren are somewhat typical also. We are to remember that it was his own that received Jesus, not those who cried, "Crucify him, his blood be upon us and upon our children."

We perceive that in the Lord's providence that nation has passed through severe experiences and ordeals since. We may hope that these are proving beneficial, and that ere long the famine for the Word of the Lord will reach them and cause them to come to the great Governor for the Bread of Life. The Scriptures intimate that this will be the time of "Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7), but he will be delivered out of it. The Apostle assures us of the same, saying that God's gifts and callings he will not repent of or alter, and that ultimately the natural Israelite shall obtain mercy through the favor of the spiritual Israelite. (Rom. 11:30,31.) The Prophet (Zech. 12:10) takes up the theme, and tells us of how they shall yet look upon him whom they have pierced, and how they shall mourn as these brethren mourned, and how then the Lord will pour upon them the spirit of prayer and supplication, and upon their manifestation of repentance his forgiveness, and how ultimately their sins and iniquities he will remember no more--that instead he will be very gracious to them and kiss them.

We close this lesson with the Apostle Paul's exhortation of our Golden Text, "Be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." The more we each realize our own indebtedness to the Lord for the forgiveness of our sins and for our adoption into his family and for the blessings that come to us as the sons of God, the more should we seek to copy

after his glorious character and be copies of our dear Redeemer, the essence of whose character is nothing less than justice to everyone--with as much additional of love and mercy as we can possibly attain to. The larger our attainments of this God-like quality the more pleasing we will be in the Father's sight and the better fitted for joint-heirship in the heavenly Kingdom, in the dispensing of the bread of life to all the world of mankind.

He who sees not these things and follows not this course according to the Apostle's word is blind and cannot see afar off--cannot see and appreciate the blessings which the Lord has promised to those who faithfully copy him. Those who do see, find the eyes of their understanding opening more widely day by day to the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the love of God which passeth understanding; and to make this progress in joyful appreciation of our benefactor, our Lord assures us means a corresponding growth in benevolence, kindness, gentleness and mercy to those with whom we have to do. While this rule must obtain, especially in the household of faith, it will also extend not only to our own immediate relationship in the flesh, but also to our neighbours and friends--yea to our enemies and to the brute creation. All of these will more and more realize the changing of our characters and dispositions, and it will be to their general blessing as well as to our joy.

R1645

JOSEPH FORGIVING HIS BRETHREN **GENESIS 45:1-15**

Golden Text--"If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him."--Luke 17:3.

Again the wisdom and noble character of Joseph shine out brilliantly in his treatment of his erring brethren. When the widespread famine had brought them down to Egypt to buy corn, he knew them, though, under the changed circumstances of his new position, they did not recognize him. He had left them a beardless boy of seventeen, sold into slavery: they now saw him a man of forty, arrayed in the vestments of royalty and speaking a foreign language which they did not understand.

Had he been of a revengeful spirit, here was his opportunity for retaliation. Now he was in power, and they were at his mercy. Or if, on the other hand, his generosity had overcome his judgment, he might have received into his favour a host of enemies to further menace the peace and usefulness of his life and to stimulate and foster their own evil dispositions. But Joseph was a well-balanced man, and so went to neither the one extreme nor the other. His course showed that he had a forgiving as well as a cautious spirit, and that under proper circumstances he was ready to exercise forgiveness.

He therefore wisely dealt with them roughly at first, that he might prove their present disposition and ascertain whether the experience of years had wrought any change in them, and also that he might learn something with reference to his father and his younger and only full brother, Benjamin. He soon learned that his father and Benjamin still lived (42:13`); but by concealing his identity and dealing roughly with them he improved the opportunity to test their present disposition, both toward their aged father and Benjamin and toward each other; and when they were tested he gladly

recognized the fact that a great change had taken place in them, as witnessed by their solicitude for their father's feelings about Benjamin, in view of his loss of Joseph, and of their tenderness toward Benjamin who was now the father's favourite in the place of Joseph, thus showing that they had overcome the bitter envy and hatred of their younger days.

He heard them confess, too, in their own language, their guilt one to another with reference to their former treatment of himself, and learned also of Reuben's remonstrance at that time. (42:21,22.) Then the circumstances drew forth the pathetic prayer of Judah for the restoration of Benjamin to his father, and his offer of himself as a substitute, as a bondman to Joseph (44:18-34); and this, too, was accompanied by a humble confession of their former sins and the recognition of present calamity as a deserved punishment from God for them. The whole account of the conference with Jacob their father and with Joseph proved their contrition and change of heart.

This was enough for Joseph: penitence and a true change of heart were all he desired, and having proved this effectually and wisely, he could no longer refrain himself (45:1): his truly forgiving heart now overflowed with benevolence, and he wept aloud and embraced and kissed his brethren, and lavished upon them the wealth of his favour, praying them also to forgive themselves and to strive to forget their former sins now so freely and fully forgiven. But Benjamin, his beloved own brother, and the one who had had no share in the guilt of the others, must have some special tokens of grace: nor did this seem to elicit the least jealousy on the part of the now reformed brethren. They must have returned to their home, not only to tell the good news, but also to confess to Jacob their sin against Joseph as the necessities of the case demanded.

The remainder of the story is of thrilling interest--the breaking of the good news to Jacob, who at first thought it too good to believe, until he saw the tokens of Joseph's favour, the wagons from Egypt, and then said, "It is enough: Joseph my son is yet alive, I will go and see him before I die." Then the long journey, undertaken and cheered by the special direction of God, saying to him in the visions of the night--"I am God, the God of thy father. Fear not to go down into Egypt, for I will there make of thee a great nation. I will go down with thee into Egypt, and I will surely bring thee up again, and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes." Then the joyful meeting and the realization of Joseph's glory and power, and better than all, of his still surviving filial and fraternal love; then the meeting and favour of Pharaoh and the settling in the land of Egypt under the fostering care of Joseph and Pharaoh, where Jacob enjoyed the evening of life in the midst of his family for seventeen years until his death.

In this beautiful story of the course of divine providence in the life of one of the beloved of the Lord, while we see and gather from it precious lessons of confidence in God and faithfulness and zeal in his service, the thoughtful reader can scarcely fail to observe its typical foreshadowing of Christ, the Saviour of his people and of the world also. Joseph was another illustration, like that of his father, of the chief blessing coming specially upon a younger son, as the chief divine blessing is also to come upon the Christ, Head and body, the Gospel Church, not the elder Jewish church. While all of Jacob's sons were elect in respect to inheriting in common a share in the Abrahamic blessing, Joseph was specially chosen as a type of Christ--Head and body--the one through whom blessings will come upon the natural seed of Abraham, that they in turn may bless all the families of the earth.

Hated of his brethren, the fleshly Israelites, sold as a slave (thirty pieces of silver being the price of slaves, or twenty pieces for those under twenty years), he was

thus prefiguring the hatred and sale of Christ by his enemies--his brethren of the Jewish nation, unto whom he came, as did Joseph, and they received him not. Joseph's three years' imprisonment seem to represent the three years of our Lord's ministry, the years after his baptism, when he was dying daily, giving up his life for others, or they were parallel also with his three days' imprisonment in the tomb, from whence, like Joseph, he came forth and was highly exalted, next to the King--to the right hand of the Majesty on high, all power in the Kingdom being given unto him.

Joseph was given full charge and used his power to bless others, storing up food for all. So Christ has been given full charge: he is Lord of all and lays up for all sufficient grace to give everlasting life to all. Nor is Christ ashamed to own as his brethren those who have nothing to commend them to his favour but humble contrite hearts. He will not be ashamed to own them before his Father and all the holy angels. This also was beautifully prefigured in Joseph's treatment of his father and brethren. He was not ashamed to present them before the king, although he knew that shepherds were an abomination to the Egyptians. Then, in the period of famine, Joseph used the grain (life) to purchase for Pharaoh the land, the people, and all that they had.--`Gen. 47:14-25`.

This scheme of statesmanship, which thus secured all the land, so that one-fifth of the annual produce should go to the support of the central government (`47:23-26`), thus breaking up the petty influence of the nobles and consolidating the state into a strong nation, gave also a striking type of Christ's work. During the Millennial age Christ will give the bread of everlasting life (himself, his merit) to all who desire it, but all must give their all in exchange to Jehovah, whom Pharaoh typified in this affair. Thus as Joseph, Pharaoh's exalted servant and representative, gave life to, or saved the lives of many, so Christ, as Jehovah's Prime Minister, has provided life for all, and offers it to all on the same conditions of faith and obedience to the King.

Then again mark how beautifully Joseph's noble and benevolent treatment of his erring brethren prefigures the foretold course of our exalted Lord Jesus with his former enemies. Charity, always a noble quality, is specially admirable when seen in such a setting as this. Joseph did not even suggest what he might justly have done to his brethren as punishment for their sin against himself twenty-three years before. After testing his brethren and finding them changed in heart and penitent, he reveals himself a true, loving, forgiving friend and brother. He makes no boast of his own wisdom or virtue as the causes of his exaltation, but ascribes all the honour to God's overruling providence. He does not even remind them of his prophetic dream, which they had all just fulfilled in prostrating themselves before him.

He simply forgave them and gave all the glory of the present deliverance from famine to God, saying, "Now, therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither, for God did send me before you to preserve life. God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God," etc. How simple, and how beautiful! Just so will Christ forgive his penitent enemies. He did not say, however, that God caused them to do the wrong. No, he told them plainly of sin, saying, "As for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it [overruled it] unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now, therefore, fear ye not, I will nourish you and your little ones. And he comforted them and spake kindly unto them."--`Gen. 50:20,21`.

Thus it is declared of Christ that he will set men's sins in order before them, and that they must freely confess their sins and bear their shame (Psa. 50:21,22; Ezek.

16:61-63; 1 John 1:9), as did Joseph's brethren. But, nevertheless, in the joys of his forgiving love and the blessing of his favour, the sting of shame will be taken away and the fruits of righteous and trustworthy character will reinstate the dignity and nobility of true manhood. In Joseph's case was emphasized God's promise to all his people--"All things shall work together for good to them that love God, to the called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8:28; Psa. 1:1-3,6.) And such as realize this providential supervision are not only kept the more humble and trustful, but are not vexed and soured by the vicissitudes of life and the misconduct of others as are those who are guiding themselves and fighting their own battles in life. Virtue in character, faith and consecration to God, appreciation of God's care and direction in all of life's affairs, and charity toward those through whose errors our trials and experiences come, is the proper attitude for every sincere child of God.

R5234

MERCY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE

GENESIS 45:1-46:7

*"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"--
Psalm 133:1.*

WHEN Joseph beheld how changed were his brethren, he sympathized with them. When he saw that their hearts went back to their wrong course in his own case, and that they realized the Divine disapproval and were sorry, he pitied them. When he saw their interest in his aged father and their unwillingness to hasten his death by an unkind act or word he was full of pity. He wished, however, that the disclosure of his identity should not be witnessed by the Egyptians. Realizing that his emotions were getting the better of him, he hastily cried out, ordering all the Egyptians to leave the room. Then he made himself known, saying, "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt."

We can well imagine the consternation of the brethren. It had appeared to them that their trials and difficulties were multiplied, and that somehow or other Joseph had been identified with all their troubles. Now, to be in his presence, to hear him speak to them, no longer through an interpreter, but directly in their own language, telling them that he was Joseph, we can imagine how they felt-- stunned. But Joseph, full of true sympathy and pity, hastened to set them at their ease. He did not cruelly threaten them, nor cause them to suffer punishment for their wrong-doing. He did not even chide them for the wrong. Instead, realizing that sin had already brought them a punishment, Joseph consoled them, saying, "Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you, to preserve life...to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God."

How beautiful the revenge! Joseph heaped upon his brethren unasked forgiveness and expressions of sympathy. Alas, how few Christians under similar circumstances would have been so noble! And yet Christians have much advantage every way over Joseph, in that they have been begotten of the Holy Spirit and have the instructions of the Scriptures. How beautifully Joseph represented in type Christ and His Spirit. How evidently our creeds of the Dark Ages misled us when they

taught us to believe that all the Jews, the brethren of Christ, were to be eternally tormented because they had crucified Jesus instead of accepting Him and becoming His disciples!

Now in the better light shining from one page to another of the Bible, God's people are seeing that instead of Messiah's purposing the eternal torture of the Jews, He purposes the contrary--that they shall obtain Divine mercy and forgiveness. This mercy will be extended to them very shortly, after Messiah's Kingdom shall have been established, as St. Paul points out in `Romans 11:25-33`: "They shall obtain mercy through your mercy." The same thought is expressed by the Prophet, saying of Israel, "They shall look upon Him whom they pierced, and shall mourn for Him." (Zechariah 12:10.) Theirs will be a mourning of true sorrow, as they shall realize the grievous wrong committed more than eighteen centuries ago. But instead of their being punished with an eternity of torture, the Lord will be gracious to them, as He declares, "And I will pour upon them the spirit of grace and of supplication." How beautiful, and how much in harmony with our typical lesson of today! Joseph's ten brethren apparently typified Israel, as the Egyptians typified the Gentiles, as Benjamin typified the Great Company, and as Joseph himself typified the Messianic class, the Elect, of whom Jesus is the Head, and the overcoming Church, the members of His Body.

SPEAK COMFORTABLY TO JERUSALEM

All along, the Bible record has been consistent with itself and with the Divine character. Our trouble has arisen from giving heed to the creeds of the Dark Ages. The Bible indeed does tell that no one can become a member of Spiritual Israel except by believing in Jesus as the Son of God, and becoming associated with Him in the self-denials and sufferings of this present time, that they may have joint-heir ship in the coming Kingdom. Our mistake was in adding to that simple Message, and telling the world, the Jews included, that the fate of all others is eternal torment.

Quite to the contrary, now we see that what Spiritual Israel gains is the Kingdom, and that Natural Israel and the world lose, in the sense of failing to attain that highest glory and blessing. But we see also that God's object in arranging for such a Kingdom is that it may bestow the needed blessings upon Natural Israel and through them ultimately upon all people. This is the general lesson taught by the full forgiveness of Joseph's brethren. The assurance given them that they merely carried out the Divine Program corresponds well with the message that shall ultimately come to the Jews; viz., that their crucifixion of Messiah was merely a carrying out of the Divine Purpose, through which the blessing of God is made available to all the families of the earth. To this agree the words of St. Peter at Pentecost. Addressing some of the repentant Jews he explained this matter fully, saying, "I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." (Acts 3:17.) St. Paul says, "For if they had known they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."--`I Cor. 2:8`.

God's attitude toward the Jews, Joseph's brethren in antitype, is clearly presented in the prophecy of `Isaiah. (40:1,2`.) That prophecy is especially located at the end of this Gospel Age. We believe that it is the message due to the Jews at the present time. It says not one word about their eternal torture, but on the contrary, it is in full agreement with St. Paul's statement that with the end of this Age God's favour will return to the Jews, and they shall obtain mercy through Spiritual Israel--the Messianic Body, of which Jesus is the Head. We read, "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her

warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double [the second portion] for all her sins."

Israel has indeed been obliged to drink the cup of ignominy and shame and sorrow, during the nearly nineteen centuries since she sold her Redeemer to the Romans, to be put to death. Sorry we are that so much of this affliction has come to her at the hands of those who mistakenly have professed to be the followers of Jesus! Sorry we are that the Jews have thus had so much reason for failing to understand the Spirit of Christ! They can understand this only by remembering that as there are true Jews and false Jews, so likewise there are true Christians and false Christians. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

JOSEPH WAS LONG MISUNDERSTOOD

Joseph's brethren failed to understand him--so great was the difference between their characters and his. Even after they had become more sympathetic and tender hearted, they had still a sufficiency of bitterness of spirit and of animosity that, if they had been in Joseph's place, they would have seen to it that somehow or other future punishments would have been meted out. They were, therefore, surprised by Joseph's words of brotherly kindness and sympathy, and unable to believe that he meant it all. They concluded that he was dealing graciously with them for his father Jacob's sake.

So we find that years afterwards, when Jacob died, these ten brethren were in great trepidation lest Joseph should then wreak his vengeance upon them. They went to him again, asking for a continuance of his forgiveness. But Joseph said unto them, "Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them."-- `Genesis 50:19-21`.

JOSEPH WAS TAUGHT OF GOD

However he learned the lesson, it is most manifest that Joseph was taught of God. Vengeance against his brethren he had none. Whatever punishment would come to them for their sin would be not his to inflict, but God's. And that punishment they evidently did receive in the mental torture, fears and forebodings of many years. Joseph had nothing to do with regulating the Divine arrangements whereby Justice always metes out punishment for every wrong. It was his to be generous, loving, kind, an exemplification of the great Redeemer and His Messianic Kingdom.

It was the same in respect to his own experiences. We note with astonishment that a man with so few opportunities had such a comprehensive grasp of the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Christ. We who have been begotten of the Holy Spirit, and who have the example of the words of Jesus and the Apostles and the history of all past ages, may still sit at Joseph's feet, and be amazed to perceive how thoroughly he learned of God, and may apply similar lessons to ourselves. Never a murmur, never a word of repining, against the bitter lot that had been his! In every word, in everything, he testifies to God's Goodness, Wisdom, Love and Power. He realized that to have made a single change or alteration in the experiences that had come to him would have been to do injury to the Plan as a whole, and he would have failed to learn some of the lessons of life which he needed.

Oh, how much all the followers of Jesus need to look unto the Lord in respect to all their trying experiences! How much we all need to have and to exercise faith in

God--that he knows, He sees and He is able and willing to make all things work together for good to us, because we love Him, because we have been called according to His Purpose, because we are seeking to make that calling and that election sure by the development of a character which will make us "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light," and for joint-heir ship with our Redeemer!

JACOB IN EGYPT

Joseph planned that for the five remaining years of the famine, at least, his father Jacob and indeed the entire family should come into Egypt. He thought of the district styled Goshen as very suitable for their purposes, being a cattle-grazing locality. Pharaoh, heartily in accord with Joseph, his prime minister, and pleased with the prosperity of affairs under his management, gave full consent, and suggested that Egyptian wagons be sent to fetch the old man Jacob and the women and children, not so able to ride upon the asses, camels, etc. Joseph prepared delicacies for the journey and little presents, indicative of his love. He sent a special message to his father, "Tell my father of my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste to bring down my father hither." Then he kissed them all good bye, saying:

FALL NOT OUT BY THE WAY

Evidently Joseph was a keen observer of human nature. Many would have thought it unnecessary to caution the brethren against disputes under all the circumstances. Many would have said, "They will be so overjoyed with the blessings of God in the outcome of their experiences that love will prevail amongst them, and no disputes." The contrary, however, is often true. When prosperity comes, there are opportunities to quarrel over the spoils, to feel more or less of envy and selfishness.

Under former conditions, the brethren would have felt jealous of Benjamin, because of the greater attention which he received from Joseph and because of the present of three hundred pieces of silver given to him. They might have queried as to how much liberty they would have in the land of Goshen. The suggestion might have come to some that they would then be under the thumb of Joseph, and that he would favour Benjamin, etc. Evidently Joseph's warning, "Fall not out by the way," was timely.

We have known matters to go similarly with the Lord's brethren. When in tribulation, their hearts were crying to the Lord, but in prosperity they were disposed to grudge one against another, and to be envious and jealous of each other's opportunities, blessings and privileges. What a great mistake! Each should remember that the Master's eye is noting his progress in Christ likeness. Each should remember that brotherly love is one of the tests of character. It is all the more true because sometimes brethren in Christ can make more trouble for us than any others. The very closeness of our relationship, the very knowledge of each other, give to each of us opportunities for criticism and evil surmising that might not arise as respects others. Well it is that all of God's people should accept Joseph's words, "See that ye fall not out one with another by the way." It is the way planned for us by the Lord. It is a narrow and difficult way, full of adversities to the flesh, and trials and tests to the spirit. Proportionately, there should be love and sympathy, co-operation and helpfulness. The words of the Psalmist used as our Golden Text in this lesson, were evidently prophetically written as respects the Church, the Lord's brethren: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

The Psalmist proceeds to compare this unity of the brethren, the Church, with the precious ointment poured upon the head of the king and of the high priest on their induction into office. The significance of the illustration evidently is that the anointing oil typified the Holy Spirit, and that as it ran down the high priest's beard, and even to the skirts of his garment, it anointed the entire body of the priest. That priest typifies Melchizedek, the Royal Priest--Jesus the Head, and the Church His Body. Throughout this Gospel Age the anointing of the Holy Spirit, which came to the Church, the Body of Christ, at Pentecost, has continued, and gives an unction, or anointing, to all of His true members. And by this anointing these members may be recognized as one with Christ, "For by one Spirit ye were all anointed into one Body."--I Corinthians 12:13`.

R5231

BENJAMIN'S PORTION FIVE-FOLD

GENESIS 43

"He that loveth his brother abideth in the light."--I John 2:10.

WHEN the wheat supply procured from Egypt began to run low, Jacob urged his sons to go again for more. But they positively refused to do so unless their younger brother, Benjamin, should go along. Then one of the brethren--Judah--became surety for Benjamin. Jacob finally consented, sending with them a present of honey, spices, etc., and double money, and Benjamin, saying, "And God Almighty give you mercy before the man [Joseph], that he may send away your other brother, Simeon, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."

Again they were expected by Joseph, who this time gave instructions that a dinner should be served for them in his presence. They were in fear, however, especially because the money had been put into the mouths of their sacks at their former visit. They communed with Joseph's steward at the door of the house and got his answer--so different from what they would probably get today in Egypt, or anywhere else. He said, "Peace be to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money. And he brought Simeon out unto them." Then he gave them water, wherewith to wash and refresh themselves, and provender for their asses, and made ready for the noon repast.

Then Joseph came in, robed as an Egyptian prince. They bowed themselves to the earth, and tendered him the present. Tenderly he inquired for their father, and then in respect to Benjamin, their younger brother. So deep was his emotion that he was obliged to retire for a time to shed tears of joy. Restraining himself, he returned, and the meal proceeded. From his own private table he caused portions to be sent to his eleven brethren, having already directed that they should be seated according to their age and birthright. This also astonished the brethren, and much more were they astonished when they perceived that the helping given to the youngest brother was five portions instead of one--a mark of special favour. The story is very simple, very touching, very beautiful, both for children and for those of mature mind. The setting is so natural as to carry with it the conviction of truth, so guileless as to be fully in harmony with what might be expected in the Book of God.

THE SPIRITUAL LESSON TAUGHT

Bible Students, realizing that Joseph was a type of The Messiah, are of the opinion that Benjamin, Joseph's younger brother by the same mother, was also a type. As Abraham's wives were typical of different covenants, so Bible Students seem to see that Rachel, the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, typified a special covenant--the Covenant of Sacrifice, which has operated during this Gospel Age, and which brings forth two distinctly separate classes of saints. These two classes of saints seem to be typified by Joseph and Benjamin.

The highest class is represented in Joseph--The Messiah --the class that includes the specially faithful of God's people during this Gospel Age--Jesus and all of His footstep followers. This class, eventually, as typified by Joseph, will reach the Throne of empire, becoming the King or Ruler of the universe, next to the Almighty Creator, typified by Pharaoh, who took Joseph out of the prison-house of death and highly exalted him to be next to himself in power and great glory.

It has evidently escaped the attention of many Bible Students, until recently, that two classes of saintly Christians are being developed during this Gospel Age--a superior class, represented by Joseph, and an inferior class, represented by Benjamin. The word Benjamin signifies "son of my right hand." The name Benoni--"son of my pain"--was given to him by his mother, who died in giving him birth. The antitypical lesson here would be that this special Covenant, typified by Rachel, gives birth to the elect Church, The Messiah, of which Jesus is the Head, and will also give birth to another class, and then cease-- expire--giving birth to no more. The secondary class are Scripturally designated as tribulation saints, the declaration being made that they shall "come up out of great tribulation" to the blessing which they will inherit. Moreover, this class is represented as being much more numerous than the still more honoured class, typified by Joseph.

"LITTLE FLOCK"--"GREAT COMPANY"

In order to present this view clearly, we must refer to Revelation, 7th chapter. There we are given the picture of 144,000, sealed in their foreheads. These are the same that are elsewhere represented as standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion, and singing the song which none but themselves could learn to sing. (Revelation 14:1-3.) Again, these are represented as being with the Lamb, standing upon the sea of glass. (Revelation 15:2,3.) Thus in various ways this group seems to represent the Very Elect, the saintly few, the Little Flock, to whom it will be the Father's good pleasure to give the Millennial Kingdom, as joint-heirs with their Lord and Redeemer.

In Revelation 7:4, we read that these are from the twelve tribes of Israel--12,000 from each tribe. This is understood by Bible Students to signify that God originally arranged for the full number of the Elect to be taken from Natural Israel, as though He did not know that Natural Israel would reject the Lord and crucify Him. The Plan was laid out on the Israelitish basis, even though God knew in advance that Israel would not obtain that which he sought (the chief blessing), but that the Election would obtain it, and the remainder of that nation would be temporarily blinded, until the completion of the gathering of the Elect.--Romans 11:7,25-33.

Although many of the Israelites were dispersed amongst the surrounding nations, it is evident from the Scriptural records that the entire nation--every tribe--was represented in Palestine after the return from Babylonian captivity. Thus, Jesus referred to His work as being for the twelve tribes of Israel, and the Apostles did also. As a matter of fact, the saintly ones of the Jews who heard the call, and who

responded, and who were begotten of the Holy Spirit, and who thus became Spiritual Israelites and sons of God--were from all the various tribes, of some more and of some less. These constituted so many of the foreordained 144,000. But there were not enough of the saintly ones to complete the Election. Hence by Divine favor the Message was carried to the Gentiles, Cornelius being the first Gentile convert. During the intervening centuries, the Gentiles who have responded to God's call have been accepted and begotten of the Holy Spirit, have been reckoned in as Israelites indeed, as spiritual members of the Seed of Abraham, as heirs, together with the elect Jews, to the First Resurrection, according to God's Promise made to Abraham--Natural Israel being still heir to God's secondary promises.

Thus the sealing of the Elect has been in progress for nearly nineteen centuries. Altogether, gathered from Jews and Gentiles, there will be 144,000 kings and priests unto God, followers of the Lamb, and His joint-heirs in the Kingdom. The filling up of these assignments of 12,000 each to the twelve tribes we may understand to be accomplished in the same way that British regiments of soldiers in India are recruited. The enlistments are made all over Great Britain, but the enlisted man--no matter from what city or country he be--may be assigned to membership in whatever regiment is deficient in numbers.

AFTER THESE THINGS I BEHELD

After the account of the sealing of the 144,000 of the Very Elect, in the same chapter we have an account of the Great Company. We read, "I beheld, and lo, a great company, whose number no man knoweth [unlike the Little Flock, these were not predestinated, or foreordained, as to number], of all nations, kindreds, peoples and tongues, stood before the Throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb."

It should be noticed that the promise to the elect kings and priests is that their blessing will be not before the Throne, but in the Throne. Moreover, their victory will not be shown by palm branches, but by crowns of glory. All these circumstances attest that this Great Company before the Throne and with palm branches are a wholly different company from the Elect, the Bride, who will share Messiah's Throne and glory. This Great Company is elsewhere referred to symbolically as the "virgins," the Bride's companions, who will follow her. They will enter into the palace with her, into the presence of the great King, but they will not be the Bride.--`Psalm 45:14,15`.

This Great Company was explained to the Revelator, and the explanation is for us. We read, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the Throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His Temple; and He that sitteth on the Throne shall dwell among them."

Bible Students notice that the Little Flock class are styled "the Temple of God," "living stones," whereas this Great Company will serve God in that Temple--in and through the Church. They also notice that this class who will wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb during a great time of trouble, must of necessity be a different class from the Bride, who are described as watching and keeping their garments unspotted from the world--that they may be without spot and without wrinkle in the presence of the King.

TWO TRIBULATION CLASSES

The Little Flock, the Royal Priesthood, the Elect Church, of which Christ is the Head, will indeed pass through tribulations. So it is written, "Through much tribulation shall ye enter the Kingdom." Indeed we know that the Lord Himself passed through great tribulation, shame, suffering and death. We know the same also of His footstep followers, the Apostles and others.

Nevertheless, these are not described in the Bible as the Tribulation Class, because, by virtue of their greater faith, these are able to rejoice in their tribulations and to count them all joy, knowing that these are working out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. These pass through the tribulations joyfully, because they consider the things that are seen as temporal. They look with the eye of faith to the things not seen, to the things eternal, which God hath in reservation for them that love Him.

The Tribulation Saints are variously pictured in the Scriptures as those who lack in the amount of their zeal, but who do not lack in their loyalty. The Tribulation Saints fail to go on and fulfil their vows of sacrifice, and to be heroes in the fight against the world, the flesh and the Adversary. As the Scriptures say, "Through fear of death they are all their lifetime subject to bondage"-- bondage to the flesh, bondage to the customs of society --fearful of the sacrificing experiences which they covenanted should be theirs.--`Hebrews 2:15`. For this reason, they cannot be accepted of the Lord as copies of His dear Son, and as worthy of sharing in His glory, honour and immortality. Nevertheless, the Lord is very compassionate, and tests them as to their loyalty to Him. As many as ultimately prove faithful, loyal, He proposes shall be granted everlasting life, even though they fail of joint-heir ship in the Kingdom, the very thing to which they were invited. As it is written, "Ye are all called in the one hope of your calling."--`Ephesians 4:4`.

Undoubtedly, there have been some of this class developed all the way down through the Gospel Age, but the Scriptures picture this class especially in connection with the tribulation coming on the world in the close of this Age. Take for instance, the statement that they should come up out of great tribulation, also St. Paul's statement that "that Day shall try every man's work of what sort it is." They that builded with gold, silver and precious stones, he declares will stand the test. The fire of that Day will not cause them tribulation--will not destroy their faith structure. Then he describes the Great Company class, saying that others have built improperly with wood, hay and stubble, and that the fire of that Day shall completely destroy all such improper structures. He declares, nevertheless, that if they builded, even improperly upon the true Foundation, they shall be saved, so as by fire--saved in the time of trouble, coming up to God's favor through great tribulation, and sharers in a goodly resurrection, although not participants in the First Resurrection. For of it we read, "Blessed and holy are all those who have part in the First [chief] Resurrection; on such the Second Death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years."--`Revelation 20:6`.

BENJAMIN'S FIVE PORTIONS

In dispensing his bounties, Joseph gave abundantly to all of his brethren. But to Benjamin, his full brother, of the same mother, he gave five portions. To Bible Students it appears that, since Joseph clearly typifies The Messiah and His kingly power and glory, the blessings distributed to his brethren represent favours that Messiah will bestow upon Natural Israel, His brethren according to the flesh, in

addition to the general blessing which His Messianic reign will give to the whole world, represented in the Egyptians.

According to this picture Benjamin, the son of pain, would represent the Great Company class of the Lord's people, who will come up out of great tribulation to a higher plane, to a higher condition, to a higher blessing, than the remainder of the world. They, begotten of the Holy Spirit like the Church, will also be spirit beings, if found worthy of life. And their brethren, who sold the antitypical Joseph, will nevertheless be greatly blessed by Him.

R5232

LESSONS LEARNED BY JOSEPH'S BRETHREN

GENESIS 44

"Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed."--James 5:16. (R.V.)

TODAY'S lesson shows us that Joseph's brethren were not nearly so hard-hearted as at first they appeared to be--when they purposed to kill him, and subsequently left him in the pit to die, and still later sold him into slavery. The doctrine of total depravity, which so many of us were taught in our youth, is again and again disproved, not only in our own characters, but in our experiences with others. He who considers everybody totally depraved approaches his fellows from the wrong standpoint. Looking for depravity, on which he has theorized, he finds it, and not looking for anything good, he misses what good there is.

The Scriptural proposition is the correct one; viz., that all men are depraved, that none is perfect, no, not one; that all have sinned; all have shared in the results of original sin; and all consequently come short of the glory of God, which was exemplified in the perfection of Father Adam. The Scriptural thought is that God can accept to fellowship with Himself only that which is perfect. He can give His favour and eternal life only to those fully in accord with His own perfection. Hence, all men being sinners through the fall, all need a redemption; all need a reconciliation.

The opportunity for such a reconciliation comes during this Gospel Age to a comparatively few, and to these it is under restriction. They must be perfect in heart, in will, in intention, and by faith must accept of Christ's merit as covering all their blemishes. From this standpoint God accepts them as New Creatures, ignoring the unintentional weaknesses of their flesh. Thus, through Christ, the true Church of consecrated believers alone are reckoned and dealt with as sons of God, have the privileges of sons of God and of fellowship with the Father in prayer, and have the Divine supervision of their interests, which guarantees that all things shall work together for their highest welfare. But even these will need to be perfected by the power of the First Resurrection before they shall see God, and be fully ushered into all the glorious things that He has in reservation for them.

The world's justification is arranged for along totally different lines. The time for it, according to the Scriptures, will be the coming Age, when Messiah's Kingdom shall bind Satan's influence, roll away the curse, and bring instead blessings to the entire race. God will not deal with the willing and obedient then as He deals with His faithful now. Instead, they will be left under the care of the great Mediator, and be

justified, or made actually right, during those thousand years. The willing and obedient, brought back to the original perfection of Adam, and fully instructed by the great Teacher, will be ready, at the close of the Millennium, to be presented to the Father, and to be accepted by Him as sons. But, meantime, all not willing and anxious for reconciliation will perish by the way, in the Second Death.

The point we would here emphasize is that God nowhere declares that man is totally depraved, but He does declare that the slightest degree of imperfection cannot be tolerated by Him. Hence the Divine arrangement, through Jesus, the Redeemer and Restorer, is that all of our lacks, all of our shortcomings, few or many, much or little, will be made up for each of us by the great Redeemer, without whose sacrifice and aid recovery to perfection and acceptableness with the Father will be impossible.

JOSEPH'S BRETHREN TENDER-HEARTED

Our lesson shows that Joseph's experiences, mixed with faith by him, worked out in him a grand character, full of sympathy and wholly obedient to God. But by a different process, Joseph's ten brethren were exercised by remorse, and became more sympathetic, more brotherly-kind, more loyal to their father Jacob. Rewards of all life's experiences--the bitter and the sweet, our right doings and our wrong doings--are intended, under the Divine supervision, to be corrective and helpful to us. Confidence in God, however, is necessary as a basis for any such blessing. We have seen Joseph's confidence, and today's lesson shows us that his brethren, although of a different character, still recognized the Almighty, had a reverence for Him, and realized that He might be expected to give just recompense for every evil deed.

Our lesson tells us that after the feast which Joseph made and in which Benjamin got five portions, the eleven brethren departed for home, well pleased with their experiences and the favour of the Egyptian ruler. Before their departure, Joseph, desiring to test his brethren as to their sympathy for their father and for their loving interest in their youngest brother, had caused his own silver cup to be placed in the mouth of Benjamin's sack of wheat. After they had gotten fairly started upon their journey homeward to Canaan,

Joseph sent after them servants from his house to say, "Why have you been so ungracious to your benefactor? Why have you taken his silver cup? What treacherous men you are!" They protested innocence, and declared that if the cup were found in their possession, they would all willingly become slaves. The search for the cup, according to Joseph's direction, began with the eldest brother and ended with Benjamin's sack. There it was found. In great distress the entire company wended its way back to the palace. Again Joseph was austere and reprovved them, that he might give them the opportunity to show their selfishness and to abandon Benjamin. Again protesting their innocence, they nevertheless declared themselves willing to become Joseph's slaves. But he answered, "God forbid! Only the one who has been guilty-- Benjamin--shall be my slave. Return to your families and to your father with food, and continue to enjoy the favours of Egypt."

This proposition he knew would test them. Would they be glad to escape personal servitude, and get back to their own families and leave Benjamin a slave? Had they the same cold heartlessness that they had exhibited in his own case, when they sold him into slavery? Would they similarly disregard their poor old father's interests and happiness? Then it was that Judah, who had pledged himself to his father that Benjamin should return in safety, made an appeal to Joseph. He narrated the circumstances connected with Benjamin's coming--how the poor old father set his heart upon Benjamin, and how he had pledged himself for the lad's return. He would

up an eloquent plea with the entreaty that he might be retained as the bondman, and that his brother Benjamin might be permitted to go free: "Now, therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad, a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father."

The evidence of a change of heart was satisfactory to Joseph, and is to us all. All who love righteousness rejoice in righteousness, as those who love sin rejoice in it. When we perceive so marked a change in those men, we rejoice not only for their sakes, but also for the general lesson which their experiences furnish. The conviction is borne in upon us that much of the sin, much of the meanness, much of the cruelty of the present time, may be attributed to inherited weaknesses and immature experience. We say to ourselves, "How great a change probably would be effected by a larger, broader, deeper knowledge of ourselves and of each other!"

And do not the daily experiences of life tend to give us the broadening of sympathies and thus character-development? We believe that this is true. Doubtless there are exceptions to every rule, but it is our conviction that there is a sufficiency of the likeness of God remaining in every member of our race to permit him at times to appreciate the good, the true, the noble, the pure. It is because he is surrounded by sin and selfishness that these Godlike sentiments are so rarely appealed to, or brought into exercise. It seems reasonable to suppose that if every human being were to have one hundred years of experience under present conditions, and then to be given a fresh start, nearly all of them would profit greatly by the experiences, and live more sane and reasonable lives. Nearly all of them would be more generous, as well as more just. We admit that there are exceptions. We are free to confess that the Divine arrangement which limits human life under present conditions is a very wise one.

Some members of the human family appear to cultivate merely the selfish propensities, and rarely to exercise beneficent sentiments. For such persons to live more than a century would mean to give them that much more opportunity selfishly to enslave their fellow creatures. God, however, has both the Wisdom and the Power to eventually bring home to each member of our race valuable lessons along the lines laid down by the wise man, "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people."--`Proverbs 14:34`.

WHEN WILL MEN PROFIT?

But someone will say, Admitting the premise that life's trials and scourgings--providential stripes--teach men the sinfulness of sin and the wisdom of righteousness, admitting that in time all of our race might learn something along the lines of this great lesson, even as did Joseph's brethren, where would be the profit of such instruction, if only the saintly, who walk in the footsteps of Jesus under a covenant of self-sacrifice, are to share in the glorious reward, the Kingdom? How will the remainder of the race profit by their experiences, if death ends all hope? Of what avail can the lessons of life be to those who fail to complete those lessons before they die, or who fail to become saints--fail to become fit for the Kingdom of God?

The answer is that we all have made a mistake in respect to the teachings of the Bible. The Bible nowhere says that all hope of salvation ends when we fall asleep in death. So far as the Church class is concerned, it is true that death will end their period of probation. But it is not true in respect to the world. The Apostle shows that the Church is a special class, called out from the world and given a trial for life everlasting or death everlasting in advance of humanity in general. These, if faithful, will not only gain everlasting life, but have it upon a higher than human plane. As

spirit beings, they will attain to that perfection in the Resurrection. It is to the Church class that the Apostle indicates that, if they commit wilful sin, death will end all, saying, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." The ye in both cases refers to the Church, not to the world. --`Romans 8:13`.

Again, the Apostle declares, "If we sin wilfully after that we have received a knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation," which would destroy us as adversaries of God. "For it is impossible for those who...were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance."--`Hebrews 6:4-6`.

Both of these Scriptures, however, apply exclusively to the Church, because the Church alone is on trial at the present time. The world's time for trial, or testing, will be in the next Age. The thousand years of Christ's reign will be the great thousand-year Judgment Day of the world. In it will be determined the worthiness or unworthiness for everlasting life of all humanity. All found worthy will eventually be perfected and granted the Divine blessing of everlasting life. All found unworthy in that world's trial Day will be condemned as unworthy of life, sentenced to the Second Death.

The experiences of the present life, good and bad, will have their bearing upon the world's future trial, but will not decide the case for any one. Because of misuse of present opportunities and knowledge, some will enter upon the future life and its judgment disadvantaged proportionately. Those disadvantages will be their stripes, their whippings, their chastisement, for present failures. Others, rightly exercised by the trials and difficulties of life, will be made more gentle, more sympathetic, more just, more loving, by them, as were Joseph's brethren. Thus they will be the better prepared for a goodly entrance upon the testing's of the great Judgment Day of the Messianic Kingdom. And as Joseph, whom they sold into Egyptian slavery, was the judge of his brethren, so The Christ, Jesus and the Church, will be the Judges of the world. As the Apostle says, "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?"--`I Corinthians 6:2`.

As Joseph judged not his brethren according to what they had done to him in the past, but according to their attitude of heart at the time, so the future judgment of the world will take note of the condition of men's hearts at the time, rather than take note of their wrong conditions of the previous time. Nevertheless, the principle of justice continually operates: he who sins shall suffer. Joseph's brethren suffered for the wrong doing toward him, and they identified their various tribulations with that great sin of years gone by. So it will be with humanity in general. Every sin, every transgression, will receive a just recompense of reward, not an unjust one-- not eternal torment.

The good deeds and the evil deeds of mankind each have an influence upon their mentality and character, and that mentality and character are not lost in the sleep of death. There is to be a resurrection of all that are in their graves. All shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and come forth, each in his own order. The saintly ones shall come forth to the perfection of life at the beginning of the Age, that they may be the judges of the world. The unsaintly ones shall come forth also, that they may be brought to a knowledge of the Truth. All shall have the opportunity of profiting by their works in the past, by the lessons learned, and by the glorious light of Messiah's Kingdom, which then will be everywhere, and which will scatter all ignorance,

superstition and darkness, and light the way of return to fellowship with God and everlasting life.

Our Golden Text is supposed by some to have reference to physical healing. But by others these words are understood especially to apply to spiritual healing, by far the more important. Of these spiritual healings the Psalmist speaks, saying, "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies." (Psalms 103:3,4.) They who hide their sins from themselves and who think to hide them from the Lord greatly err, and will make no progress.

R5225

THE SOWING AND THE REAPING

GENESIS 42

"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."--Galatians 6:7.

THE STORY of Joseph and his brethren continues. Today's lesson illustrates how the remembrance of their cruelty toward their brother Joseph, inspired by envy, continued to harass the evil-doers many long years after. Our Golden Text seems to lay down a general principle, applicable not only to the consecrated people of God, but to mankind in general. Whatsoever anybody sows wilfully, intelligently, will bring a harvest, a reaping, of similarly good or evil kind. The famine was general throughout that region of the world. It included Palestine as well as Egypt. The word spread that there was no lack of food in Egypt, that there was corn there, sold at moderate prices, and that it belonged to the old stock. Jacob directed his sons, who were men of families themselves, to go down to Egypt and make purchases of wheat.

As strangers, they were directed to Joseph, who doubtless was on the lookout for them. He spoke to them through an interpreter, asking if they were not spies, coming to see how much wheat was in Egypt, that they might bring an army to steal it. They explained their situation truthfully. Joseph then inquired about his father and his younger brother Benjamin. Finally he put one of them into prison, and sent all the others home with corn, with the understanding that they would need more corn and might have plenty of it, as long as the famine lasted, provided that they should prove that they were not spies by bringing their youngest brother along with them. Meantime, Simeon would be held as hostage.

The guilty consciences of the brethren began to connect up these various experiences with their own wrong course in the past. They said one to another, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, when we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us." They knew not that Joseph understood them, but he withdrew and wept. His heart was not hard. He was merely giving them a lesson that would be profitable for them in coming years.

The Scriptures represent that when the Messianic Kingdom will begin to shed its blessings abroad, the antitypical Joseph, Messiah, will likewise speak roughly to the people in a time of trouble, and cause them great vexation and worry as to what the outcome will be. But all the while the Lord's heart will be full of love and sympathy for the poor groaning creation, for whom He already has died, and in whose

interest His Kingdom will be established. The time of trouble upon the world in the beginning of Messiah's reign will evidently be for the very purpose of preparing the hearts of mankind for the blessings which the Lord is so willing to bestow.

MANY STRIPES AND FEW STRIPES

When Jacob's ten sons arrived with their wheat, they told the whole story of their experience to their father. They explained why Simeon was not with them--that he was kept as a hostage. Moreover, they were perplexed to find that no money had been charged them for the wheat. The money they had paid for it was returned in each sack. Everything seemed strange to them, and the minds of the brethren continually adverted to the crime of years ago, in connection with their brother Joseph. Many times during those intervening years they had reaped crops of sorrow and fearful surmising respecting what the providence of a just God might ultimately exact from them in the nature of trouble, similar to that which they had brought upon their brother.

How advantageous it would be to the whole world if this principle were generally recognized--if all realized the truthfulness of God's Word that every trespass must receive a just recompense of reward! We have lost such an appreciation of justice, and such a looking for a righteous retribution, in the fog of a very false doctrine, which has become prevalent. That false doctrine ascribes only the one punishment for every sin, and that an unthinkable one; viz., everlasting torture. In the first place, how few there are that really believe that doctrine or are really influenced by it! Its monstrosity makes it unbelievable, and turns the mind away from the proper view of the real punishments which God has foretold.

Added to this first inconsistency and its evil effect, we mention another, which associates itself thus: Our Catholic friends claim that by membership in the church they will escape eternal torment and get some lesser torment. And that theory seems so much more logical than the Protestant one that many accept it as the lesser evil of the two. Then comes our Protestant theory that a man or a woman, the moment before death, may say, "God forgive me!" and immediately pass into Paradise, and escape all punishment for sins. These theories, we claim, are all injurious, as well as inconsistent. The Scriptural theory, we are sure, would be found the more effective, if it were preached, if it were believed.

That Scriptural theory is expressed in our Golden Text: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." If he sows a desire for cruelty, words of deceit, injustice, selfishness, evil speaking, slander, he will surely have a reaping time, and will gather rewards in harmony with his desire. It is impossible for humanity to improve upon the Divine arrangement. Hence all Christian people should begin afresh to tell the world both of the Justice and the Love of God--that God's just penalty against sin is death, but that He has made provision through Christ for a release from that penalty, during Christ's Messianic reign of a thousand years. Then every member of Adam's race will be granted a full opportunity of reconciliation with God and of restoration to the image and likeness of God, lost for all by Father Adam's sin.

But meantime, each individual has a responsibility in respect to his every word and act and thought. To whatever extent he sins against light, knowledge and the Golden Rule, to the same extent he degrades his character, and thus makes his opportunity for return to the image and likeness of God the more difficult. He whose conscience becomes the most degraded will find the way for retracing his course the most difficult and steep. According to this Divine rule, the Millennium may find heathen people more ready to go up on the Highway of Holiness than people of so-

called Christian lands. The latter, having had more light, more privilege, more opportunity and sinning against greater knowledge, have seared their consciences more deeply. Of some such Jesus exclaimed, "How can ye escape the condemnation of Gehenna!"--the Second Death.

JACOB'S GRAY HAIRS FOR SHEOL

When poor old Jacob heard that Benjamin would be required to go on the next expedition for wheat, he demurred and declared that it must never be. Joseph was gone, and if now he should lose his youngest son, Benjamin, the grief would bring down his gray hairs quickly to Sheol--the tomb--the state of death. In our common version English Bible this word Sheol is repeatedly translated Hell, Pit, and Grave. In olden times, these three English words were synonymous in meaning. As for instance, a man, speaking of burying so many bushels of potatoes in a pit, would call it helling the potatoes. And when this term was used in respect to humanity, sometimes the word grave was used. Altogether, the word Sheol occurs sixty-six times, and more than one-half of these times it is translated pit and grave.

When the Revised Version was in preparation, the learned men charged with that work refused any longer to translate the word Sheol by the word Hell, because in the intervening centuries that word had gradually lost its original meaning and had come to have the significance of a place of fire and of torture. Since no such meaning attaches to the word Sheol in the Hebrew, these scholars refused to so translate it into English. To these facts they all agreed, but then came a dispute as to how it should be translated. Some would not agree to translate Sheol uniformly by the English word grave, or tomb, fearing that this would appear very radical to some Christian people.

Finally, as a compromise to settle the question, it was concluded that in all places where Sheol and the corresponding Greek word Hades had been translated Hell in our Common Version, the Hebrew word Sheol or the Greek word Hades should be substituted, and left without translation. If any of the people found out their meaning, it would be all right. If they did not find out, they might remain in ignorance, and still think of Hades and Sheol as signifying a place of torture. Our Baptist friends have recently met with a similar difficulty and have given the translation of Sheol and Hades as "the Underworld." Of course the grave, the tomb, the state of death, may be thus indicated, and no one can find fault.

It is needless to say that when Jacob spoke of his gray hairs as going down to Sheol, he did not mean his sons to understand that he expected to go to eternal torment. What he did mean is evident. He meant, "My sons, I am now old and gray-headed, and to lose this youngest son would hasten my death"--"bring down my gray hairs to Sheol, to the tomb." No one need question where Jacob's gray hairs would go. They did go to Sheol eventually, but not because of grief. Jacob's old age was made very happy by the fellowship of his sons, and by the realization that God had highly exalted Joseph to the ruler ship of Egypt.

OUR GOLDEN TEXT LESSON

Although St. Paul, as we have seen, made a general observation to the effect that whatsoever any man sows, that shall he also reap, nevertheless, he evidently used these words with particular reference to the experiences of the Church. The context makes such an application. The context applies these words directly to the consecrated people of God, assuring them that a consecration to be dead with Christ is not sufficient. On the contrary, God cannot be mocked, cannot be deceived, cannot be

trifled with. If God has entered into a covenant with us, nothing else than our agreement will stand.

Then the Apostle recites the agreement which Christians covenant with the Lord. They covenant to sacrifice all earthly interests, aims, hopes, that thereby they may be pleasing and acceptable to God, and become heirs with Jesus of the incorruptible things to be attained on the other side the veil, as spirit beings, as New Creatures in Christ. He says, "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." By this he means that if any Christian who has entered into this covenant with God to become dead to the will of the flesh and alive to the will of God, shall live after the flesh--according to its desires, its promptings, its leadings, its appetites--the end of that man's way will be death--the Second Death, symbolized by the Gehenna fire, which destroyed the offal outside the City of Jerusalem.

On the other hand, if any man sow to the spirit, if he live according to the New Creature, by living in harmony with his covenant of consecration--not merely making a start in the right direction--this would decide the matter in his favor. Some of the best people who have ever lived have made more or less serious blunders, under the temptations of the flesh. But stumbling into sin would not be living after the flesh--it would merely be a start to so live. The soul, rightly exercised by his sin, by the weakness, may recover itself, and come back to the Throne of Heavenly Grace, and in the name of Jesus obtain mercy and find grace to help for further time of need. But if these opportunities and privileges were not used, and if the course of living after the flesh were pursued, the result would be death.

So, on the other hand, to make a start to live a righteous, self-sacrificing life would not be sufficient; and to return to a righteous course, after having been overtaken in a fault and shedding some tears of penitence, would not be sufficient to recover him. But if we live after the Spirit, if we through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, then we shall gain the eternal life on the spirit plane which God has promised to all the faithful. But this matter of living after the Spirit is a great contract, and one that needs continual watchfulness and prayer, lest we be overtaken in a fault--lest we let these precious things of God's promise slip from us--lest we become overcharged with the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches--lest our faith become weak and we faint by the way.

We need to have this thought definitely before our minds: While each act and word and thought has its bearing upon the ultimate results in every Christian's life, nevertheless no one thought, no one word, and no one deed carries the deciding weight, either for good or for evil. The more loyal we are, the more faithful we are, the fewer slips we shall make, the more like our Redeemer we shall be, and the brighter will be our reward, for as the Apostle declares, "As star differeth from star in glory, so also is The Resurrection of the Dead." Those, then, who are of the world may know that every good and every evil act of theirs will have a weight and influence in respect to their trial for life or death under the Messianic Kingdom arrangements. And every Christian who has entered into a covenant to become dead with Christ that he may also live with Him, to suffer with Christ that he may also reign with Him--all such should know that every word, every thought, every act, has a bearing upon the great results. Hence, as the Apostle says, all such should walk through life circumspectly, wisely, seeking to know and to do the things pleasing to God, and to attain the highest reward.

PART - 4

JOSEPH'S LAST DAYS



THE CLOSE OF A NOBLE LIFE

GENESIS 50:15-26

*"So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."
--Psa. 90:3.*

JACOB was a hundred and thirty years old when his sons returned with news of Joseph's greatness in the land of Egypt. His joy at hearing that his son was still alive, and now great, was off-set by the natural weakness of his advanced years. Hence he could scarcely trust himself to believe the report, even with the explanation given by his sons, of how they had sold Joseph into slavery, and had besmeared his coat with blood for their father's deception, twenty-two years before. However, the story of his sons was well attested by the royal present which Joseph had sent to him, and by the Egyptian wagons sent to bear him and the family as comfortably as possible in the journey. These wagons were doubtless the carriages of that day, workmanship in that line not having advanced to present proficiency. Jacob was persuaded, and started on the journey, during which he offered sacrifices to the Lord, possibly questioning in his own mind the wisdom of thus leaving the land of promise, and whether or not it might be interpreted of the Lord as an abandonment of his faith, or a relinquishment of the blessing which from earliest childhood had centered and directed his course of life.

The Lord answered his query, and his sacrifices (probably by a dream) assuring him that he was taking the proper course in going into Egypt, and that ultimately his posterity should come again into "the land of promise." The spiritual Israelite should thus have in view at all times that which by his covenant has become the center of his life, the center of his interest, of his hopes and of his aims--the Abrahamic covenant and his share therein. He, too, must be on the look-out lest there shall be deceptions of the Adversary combined with earthly prosperity and the world's favour. When we are undergoing disadvantages or persecutions we are in much less danger than when the tide of worldly prosperity sets in our direction. Let us remember at such times to go often to the Lord, to seek to know his will, fully, completely; to bring to mind our covenant and its value, as above all earthly considerations. And let us offer unto the Lord the true sacrifice--presenting the merits of our dear Redeemer's sacrifice as the ground of our acceptance, repeating the full devotion of our hearts--renewing our covenant. This is the only safe way in this pilgrim journey.

We pass hastily over the narrative of the presentation of Jacob and Joseph's brethren to Pharaoh, and their settlement in the land of Goshen. After they had resided there seventeen years (^{Gen. 47:28}) Jacob died, was buried with all the ceremonials common to the Egyptian court, because he was a relative of Pharaoh's representative. And it is here that our lesson proper begins. Joseph's brothers judged him to have a disposition considerably like their own; they could not believe him to be thoroughly generous and forgiving, and though they acknowledged his kindness toward them, they said to themselves, This was merely on account of our father Jacob, and not on our account, and now that our father is dead Joseph will treat us differently. It was because moved with such feelings that they first sent a messenger to Joseph, and afterward followed themselves into his presence, to ask his mercy and to declare themselves willing to be his servants.

It strikes us that this well illustrates the condition of many who come to the Lord with an insufficiency of faith. They are convinced of his mercy toward them, and yet are always fearful. The truth is that they do not know him; they think of him as moved by like passions with themselves, more or less depraved, more or less controlled by animosity. It is an evidence of growth in grace when we come to that place in our experiences where, admitting our own guilt and unworthiness of divine favour we have, nevertheless, become so intimately acquainted with the Lord as to have a full assurance of faith in his declaration that our sins are forgiven. It is to such a development of grace that the Lord referred, saying, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3.) But such a knowledge is not to be obtained instantaneously, but rather is to be the result of a growth in grace; for we grow in grace as we grow in knowledge, and we grow in knowledge as we grow in grace;--the two keeping pace, the one with the other, as do our feet in walking. It is because the majority who have named the name of Christ do not grow in grace and in knowledge that they fail to attain to that grand condition of which the Apostle speaks as "full assurance of faith"--full confidence in the Lord, in his goodness, in his wisdom, in his love, in his providential care over all of their affairs. And the lack of such growth is owing to their failure to offer their sacrifices unto the Lord --to commit all of their ways to him.

Joseph's answer to his brethren was most noble, and gives good evidence that his conduct was not merely an outward profession, but the result of an established character. He did not even say to himself, My brothers have misunderstood me, but though I freely forgive them I will use their fear as a stepping stone to greater power over them, and will say to them, I will do you no harm, but on the contrary treat you most kindly, as long as you are fully obedient to me, and send me presents yearly, or give me tithes of your increase, or come annually to make obeisance before me, and to acknowledge afresh your wrong, and to confess my generosity. No; he had too noble a character for this; he was too unselfish. On the contrary, he said, "Fear not; for am I in the place of God?" The secret of his right course with his brethren was the correct view which he took of the matter himself; he saw himself as merely God's servant in dealing with his brethren, and in all things. He saw that God's providence had been in the whole affair. How could he think otherwise? He saw the fulfilment of his inspired dreams; he had noted the miraculous leading of divine providence in the various steps by which he had been led from slavery to the throne of Egypt; he probably reflected that if now he should either do evil toward his brethren, or think unkindly of them, he would be casting a reflection upon one of the instrumentalities which God had used for his blessing. He could not do this and be loyal to and appreciative of divine power, and he communicated to his brothers for their encouragement and comfort this thought; that although they had purposed evil, and had done evil, nevertheless the thing really done was a good thing, but for which they deserved no credit, but discredit, and God all the honour. He would have them see that this was the basis of his dealing with them, and that he felt not the slightest animosity, but a full appreciation of the divine blessing, which had come through their course.

How great a blessing it would be for all spiritual Israelites to learn well this lesson; viz., that if we accept the results of any matter as being good, and if we realize that we were guided to those results by divine providence, we should think and feel most generously, most kindly, toward those who were the instruments used by providence, notwithstanding the fact that they might have been unwilling instructors, or, like Joseph's brethren, have verily intended opposite results. Those who are enabled to take such a view of affairs and forces operating in their daily lives are

enabled "always to triumph through the Lord," as the Apostle expresses it. And such find no room for bitterness or railing, either against Satan or against any of his servants. `2 Cor. 2:14`; `Jude 9`. This does not mean that they call the evil course good; nor that they will or should have any sympathy with the evil course; nor with the evil motives inspiring it; nor with the evil persons, so long as they are in harmony with the evil motives and evil course. But it does mean that their minds will be so filled with the thought of divine supervision in their affairs, and how all the time they were safe under the protecting care, the shadow of the Almighty, and that all things are working for their good, however they outwardly appear, that they will not have any bitterness whatever, either of word or of heart, toward those who attempted to, and outwardly did, do them evil, but whose evil intentions and conduct were overruled by the Almighty. In proportion as the Lord's people get into the large place where they can take a broad view of the situation, in that same proportion will they find themselves not only delivered from anger and malice and hatred and strife toward their opponents, but instead, possessed of "the peace of God which passeth all understanding," ruling in their hearts, keeping them secure amidst all of the storms and vicissitudes of life--because their anchor holds within the veil. They have "set to their seal that the Lord is true," and hence can rejoice always.

Not only was Joseph's course the right one in the sight of God, the noble one in the sight of all right-minded people, the blessed one as respected his brothers, their comfort, their peace, their love toward him,--but it was in every sense the proper and the best course as respected his own peace, joy, blessing. When he allayed their fears and comforted them, and spake kindly unto them, and promised them and their families the same care as when their father lived, he was taking also the course which must have brought the greatest blessing and comfort to his own heart. All do not know it, but it is a fact that the grandest quality that man can exercise, and the one which brings the largest amount of blessing itself, is the exercise of the God-like quality of mercy, compassion, benevolence. Those of spiritual Israel who have not practiced in this direction are not far advanced in spiritual development, and those who have practiced realize the truthfulness of the Lord's words, "Blessed are the merciful," and "Blessed are the peacemakers."

The next few verses of our lesson cover the period of fifty-four years from the death of Jacob to the death of Joseph; and give us comparatively little information, except that they give fresh evidence that the basis of Joseph's strength of character and fidelity to principle which carried him safely through the vicissitudes of his remarkable experience was faith in God--faith in the Abrahamic promise. And so we find it to-day, and all through the past, so far as we are able to decipher the teachings of history; those who have been the Lord's faithful people, have all been inspired by the hope set before us in the gospel. This is the hope of which the Apostle speaks, saying that it is "an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast;"--it holds firm and secure in the storms and difficulties of life, and prevents the wrecking of our lives upon the rocks of sin, deception, doubt, selfishness, etc.

Who can doubt that it was Joseph's respect unto the divine promise that kept him faithful as Potiphar's steward, again in the prison, and again as Pharaoh's representative in the throne? In proportion as heavenly promises are before our minds, earthly and selfish ambitions are dwarfed and lose their power over us. Joseph's eye of faith, centered upon God's promise to Abraham and upon the land of Canaan, exercised a potent influence, because he realized that to be a friend of God, and an heir of God's promises, called for a purity of heart and of life which God could approve. Looking back he saw the influence of these promises upon his great

grandfather, Abraham, upon his grandfather, Isaac, and upon his father, Jacob, and we see that the same promise controlled him to his great advantage. The people who today become enamoured of wealth and of position and of power, so that they would be willing to sacrifice principles of justice and of truth that they might selfishly grasp these, thereby give evidence that they lack the power of the truth, the power of the Abrahamic promise, to control them and their lives. Had the Abrahamic promise not been forceful and weighty in the mind of Joseph he might have been plotting and scheming for the throne of Egypt or to have obtained the mastery over his own brethren; but realizing that God was behind the promise he was waiting patiently for that, as the greatest and most wonderful blessing conceivable--far beyond the things which he could have grasped, and the grasping of which would have meant his relinquishment of God's promise. Not, however, that he expected to go up out of Egypt into the land of Canaan himself; for he evidently knew, and it probably came down to us through him, that God had appeared to Abraham, and told him that his posterity should be in Egypt, and be evilly treated there, and that the period of their sojourn would be four hundred years.

Joseph's hope in God and in that Abrahamic promise must have been, therefore, a hope through a resurrection of the dead; and although it taught a valuable lesson, it was doubtless because of his imperfect understanding of the resurrection, and the power of God, that he so particularly gave commandment respecting the carrying up of his bones out of Egypt into Canaan, when the time of God's favour should come, and Israel should be delivered. And so must the spiritual Israelite have his mind centered in the future fulfillment of the divine promises, through a resurrection of the dead, if he would be delivered from the worldly influences of this present time, and be kept loyal to the Lord and to the highest principles of character. This faith in a future kingdom, future honour, future riches, future glory, dwarfs into insignificance the honour and glory and wealth of this present time, and makes all true believers separate from the world in these respects, and thus prepares them to think of the affairs of this present time from a more just and more equitable and dispassionate standpoint--they are removed from the immediate influence of selfishness in its most powerful forms, even though they still find, notwithstanding their faith in the promises, the necessity for keeping the body under, and mortifying its natural disposition toward selfishness.

Our Golden Text is appropriate to the lesson, and every way worthy of the attention of the spiritual Israelite. We know that our days are numbered as respects the present life. We know that we need not expect eternal life under present conditions, and thus far the world and the Christian are on a common level; but here they part, the one saying to himself, "Life is short, and I must grasp and use it for myself, the best I can." The other, with a higher wisdom, that cometh from above, realizes his own inability and insufficiency, heeds the message from the Lord respecting an eternal life beyond the tomb-- the resurrection life, and goes to the Lord, petitioning for wisdom respecting the life that now is, as well as that which is to come.

In answer to his petitions he is taught of God in the experience of life to more and more appreciate the eternal, the everlasting life, and to spend time and energy in building up such a character as would be pleasing to his Creator, and bring the reward of "life everlasting." The Christian, in numbering his days, does not do so with a doleful or disconsolate sentiment, although he does so with sobriety. He counts the days as they go as so many blessings, so many privileges, so many opportunities to "show forth the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light," to render assistance to others in the pilgrim journey, and to develop in himself more

and more of the character pleasing in the sight of God,-- to become more and more a copy of God's dear Son. As he numbers the days gliding swiftly by, and perceives how he is using them in harmony with the divine instructions, he ultimately comes to that condition of heart in which he is longing for the Kingdom and the full attainment of all the glories into which he hopes to be ushered, as a sharer in the first (chief) resurrection. And from this standpoint he numbers the days as they go by joyfully, and is glad when the days of the years of his present pilgrimage end; because his hope in the Lord, and in the gracious features of his plan, is growing daily stronger, clearer and brighter.

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JOSEPH'S LAST DAYS

GENESIS 50:14-26

Golden Text--"The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."--Prov. 4:18.

The evening of Joseph's life reveals to us a true nobility of character, which had stood the test of many a fiery ordeal, and displayed many of the blessed fruits of righteousness. The close of his life was like the sinking of the sun to rest after the shining of an eventful day. He had been a faithful servant, a loyal friend, a merciful and sympathetic brother, a dutiful and loving son, and finally a modest and moderate prince.

To Joseph, as to most of the patriarchs, the severest trials and discipline came in early and middle life, and were rewarded with a serene old age; while to many others such as the Apostle enumerates in `Heb. 11`, the last days were tragic, and they filled the martyr's grave. The Lord's discipline and testing of his children in the furnace of affliction are regarded by many as evidences of his disfavour, while their temporal prosperity is regarded as a sure sign of his favour. But this is a great mistake; for experiences of both kinds are parts of the trial and testing. We are tested on one side of our nature by the storms of adversity, and on the other by the calms of temporal prosperity; and blessed is the man who neither faints under the former, nor is beguiled by the latter. Such well rounded, symmetrical and strong characters are indeed precious in the sight of the Lord.

Such a man was Joseph: he was schooled and proved in adversity in earlier life and, in his later years, the topmost waves of temporal prosperity never seemed to move him to vanity, nor in any degree to unman him. He still looked beyond these temporal things to "the city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." His confidence in God and his trust that the promise made to Abraham should be fulfilled, never forsook him. Even when surrounded by wealth and comfort he remembered that Egypt was not the promised land; and when he was dying, he, like his father Jacob, indicated his hope in a resurrection and the subsequent fulfilment of the divine promise, by commanding that his body should be buried in the land of Canaan. "By faith, Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel [verses 24,25], and gave commandment concerning his bones."--`Heb. 11:22`.

It is probable that as Joseph proved so valuable a servant to the Pharaoh who exalted him, he was continued in office by his successor on the throne, perhaps to the end of his life. The benefits he had conferred upon Egypt were of great value, and seem to have been very gratefully received and remembered. The path of the just of the `Golden Text` is not an individual path, but one path in which all the just ones walk: it is the path of righteousness (`Psa. 23:3`), the path marked out by the Word of the Lord as one of meekness, patience, faith, love, etc.; and those who keep in this path are led of God into all truth in its due season. And this pathway becomes more and more radiant with the glorious light of divine truth as it nears "the perfect day" when the sun of righteousness shall have risen and the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea--the Millennial day of Christ's reign on earth.

All the patriarchs and prophets and saints of the past have walked in this path, and on all of them the light of God shone as it became due; but upon none did it ever shine so clearly as it shines to-day; for we are even now in the dawning of the glorious day of Christ, and soon this light will shine upon all.

Courage! Press on...

Tired! well, what of that?
Didst fancy life was spent on beds of ease?
Fluttering the rose leaves scattered by the breeze?
Come, rouse thee! work while it is called today:
Courage! arise! go forth upon thy way.

Lonely! and what of that?
Some must be lonely; 'tis not given to all
To feel a heart responsive rise and fall,
To blend another life within its own:
Work can be done in loneliness. Work on.

Dark! well, what of that?
Didst fondly dream the sun would never set?
Dost fear to lose thy way? Take courage yet!
Learn thou to walk by faith, and not by sight;
Thy steps will guided be, and guided right.

Hard! well, what of that?
Didst fancy life one summer holiday,
With lessons none to learn, and naught but play?
Go -- get thee to thy task! Conquer or die!
It must be learned; learn it then, patiently.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

JOSEPH AND CHRIST

The history of Joseph the son of Jacob, as given in the book of `Genesis`, is one of considerable interest. Taken just as a true story of a life, there are but few like it. "Truth is stranger than fiction;" and it is certain that many, both young and old, have read this history with thrilling interest and lasting profit. The exemplary conduct of Joseph is worthy of admiration and imitation. His relation to the history of God's cause and people, in their early stage of development, is important. As an example of the over-ruling Providence of God in the affairs of men and nations, showing how man, seeking his own selfish ends, and to a certain degree succeeding, may yet have his plans thwarted, and the seeming evil turned to good account, the history of Joseph is most remarkable. For many reasons his history has been justly valued by many; but to us the most important feature of his case is its allegorical character. This feature of bible history, though overlooked by many, and denied by some, is becoming more and more apparent. The story itself, though true, as we fully believe, sinks into comparative insignificance when its spiritual import is seen.

The greater eclipses the less, and the spiritual is greater than the natural, but while this is true, there can be no doubt that those who appreciate the spiritual, value the letter, because of its deeper import, even more than those who see only the letter; just as men who expect to be changed from the natural to the spiritual body in due time, value the natural body because it is a stepping stone to the higher, more than do they who ignore the spiritual, and who act on the epicurean principle: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." We regard Joseph's history as representing in its general features the life and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. In a type proper, as in the law, we would expect "every jot and title" of it to be fulfilled, but in an allegory we look for a picture only on general principles. The case of Abraham's two wives, and their sons, Isaac and Ishmael, which is declared to be "an allegory," (`Gal. 4`) will illustrate. Every feature of their lives is not mentioned, but there is a most remarkable correspondence between the facts in their history, and the facts in relation to the two Jerusems; to which Paul makes the application. We do not intend to make parallels, or to force into use any feature of Joseph's life, and say this and that must have a parallel; but using as a basis what is revealed of Christ elsewhere, we find the parallels, and by these, as illustrations, confirm the truth. We regard these correspondences as strong evidence that the same mind that created the gospel plan, superintended the lives of the ones of whom the history is given, and inspired in his own way the writers. The evidence seems all the stronger in view of the fact that many features of this correspondence have not long been seen. They have been hidden away as jewels in the earth, to be uncovered for the encouragement of the faith of the disciple in this hour of bold and defiant infidelity. "He that hath ears to hear let him hear." It seems as if no Christian could have any difficulty in tracing the many features of our Saviour's life and work in the life of Joseph, when their attention is called to them.

Joseph was the well beloved son of his father: "Israel loved Joseph more than all his children," `Gen. 37:3`. For this fact, his reproving of sin, and for his ambitious dreams of coming glory, his brethren hated him. So Jesus, the "beloved Son" of his Father, on account of his condemning their wickedness, and because of his royal claims, as one born to be their king, was hated by his brethren--the Jews. The words are almost identical. "Shalt thou indeed reign over us?" said Joseph's brethren, when

he had told them of his dream of their sheaves making obeisance to his sheaf." "We will not have this man to reign over us;" "We have no king but Caesar;" said Jesus' brethren. In both cases the malice became so intense that death was determined on. They both went down into the pit, and were both delivered from death. It is true Joseph did not actually die, but neither did Isaac, who in another case prefigured Christ, and it is said "Abraham offered his son Isaac," and also "Received him from the dead in figure." The pit was a figure of the death state into which Christ descended. Joseph was counted dead, and his resurrection was thus in figure; but Christ's death and resurrection were both in fact.

The events do not all occur in the same order in both cases; but both were severely tempted and yet resisted; both occupied for a time the position of a servant, and were shamefully abused; both were favored of God in their sufferings and their cause miraculously vindicated; both had a price set upon them by their enemies in certain "pieces of silver;" and both gained a glorious victory, being exalted to the "right hand of power." Pharaoh committed all power of his kingdom into Joseph's hand: "Thou shalt be over my house and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou." `Gen. 41:40`. He was royally robed and enthroned, and before him went the cry "Bow the knee."

What Pharaoh did thence forward was done through Joseph, and the only way to obtain the blessing of Egypt was by the "way" or mediation of Joseph. So Christ was exalted to the right hand of God; "sat down with the Father in his throne;" had all power given unto him in heaven and earth; "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow;" and it is said of him, "Let all the angels of God worship him." "He is Lord of all," "the way the truth and the life," and "no man cometh unto the Father except by" him.

One grand feature of the work of Joseph is that of giving the needed bread, and there was nowhere else to go; so it clearly represents Christ's work as Life-Giver. "I am the bread of life;" "I am the truth;" "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." "The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life." Well may we say as did Peter: "To whom shall we go; thou hast the words of eternal life." Oh, that all our readers might realize that we are as fully dependent on the Lord Jesus for Immortality and Eternal life, as were the Egyptians dependent upon Joseph for the support of the natural life. Eternal life only in Christ, is the essence of the Gospel. The first man did not have it, and so did not lose it. He was natural; and the flesh was tried and failed that the need of the Second Man might be appreciated. Let us remember that in order to get the Bread we must apply for it as did the hungry to Joseph. "He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Oh, ye hungry ones, feed upon his precious truth and be filled. We would not overlook the realization of Joseph's youthful dreams. His brethren that scorned him and cast him out had at last to come to him for bread, and they gladly bowed before him. He whom they rejected and counted as dead became their benefactor and saviour. They looked on him whom they had pierced (in figure), and they mourned and were ashamed, but he fed them and even excused them-- "It was not you that sent me hither, but God." "Now, therefore, be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life." --`Gen.45:5-8`. Let God's mercy be praised!

When Christ left the Jewish house desolate it was not eternally, but "until the time come when ye shall say blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." In the coming day of restitution, the Lord says: "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplication (favour and

prayer), and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn."--`Zech. 12:10`. Yes, they will mourn and be ashamed of themselves, when in prayer before him whom they despised, even as did Joseph's brethren when they discovered their brother. But it is the mourning of penitence, and not of despair; it is caused by the spirit of favor which is shown them by the long lost brother now restored. They find him exalted as a King and Life-Giver, and he cares for them. They give themselves to him and he gives them a home and all they need. Thus we see that Joseph in many ways represents Christ, and confirms our view of God's plan of the ages.

Truly, God is good, and "his mercy endureth forever." Well may we say, "how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out." What we cannot discover he can uncover or reveal; and "thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift," and the glimpse he has given us of his plan and his love. "We love him because he first loved us." We love one another because "he hath given us of his spirit." "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love."

- J. H. P.

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN

- *Robert Seklemian*

TODAY we are going to consider the story of Joseph which comprises chapters 37 and 39 to 50 of Genesis. It would take too long to read the actual account so we will briefly summarize and paraphrase the story after which we will see what lessons are to be learned from it. Jacob, the grandson of Abraham who was renamed Israel, especially loved his wife Rachel. Her firstborn son was called Joseph. Then she



died in childbirth bearing another son, Benjamin. Jacob greatly grieved Rachel's death and with her gone, the intensity of his love showered upon her children, especially the firstborn Joseph. Jacob had eleven other sons, but Joseph was his favorite. He showed his favoritism in many ways. For example, he had a special garment made for Joseph, a coat of many colors and of many pieces, a coat such as was worn by nobility. Perhaps he thus indicated to the rest of his family that Joseph would be heir. The ten other brothers were consumed with jealousy. The record says: "They hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him." As if things weren't bad enough, Joseph dreamed a strange dream one night and in his innocence related it to his brothers. It seems that they were all binding sheaves of wheat in the field and Joseph's sheaf arose and stood upright, whereupon his brothers' sheaves stood around in a circle and bowed down to Joseph's sheaf. As a result of this dream the account says, "They hated him yet more."

Then Joseph dreamed again. This time the sun and the moon and eleven stars bowed down to him. When he told this one, his father remarked, "Shall I, and thy mother, and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?" This was the last straw. The hatred of Joseph's brothers was whipped to a jealous rage. This was their frame of mind when they journeyed from their home to find pasturage for their flocks some distance away. They were gone so long that their father began to worry about them and decided to send Joseph to see how they were and bring him word again. We can imagine that Joseph and his dreams of superiority were thoroughly discussed by his brothers in the field. This airing of mutual grievances would further incite their hatred. They were in just such a frenzy of jealous rage when the one posted as the camp lookout called out, "Here he comes! Here comes that dreamer." In the crystal-clear air of that region an approaching person can be seen a long distance away. They easily recognized it was Joseph because of his long coat of many pieces and bright colors. Each brother instantly had the same thought--now he was in their power! His father was not there to protect him. The object of their hatred was in their hands. As Joseph innocently approached, probably waving a happy greeting, they held a hasty conference and the almost unanimous decision was: "Come now, therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit; and we will say, some evil beast hath devoured him; and we shall see what will become of his dreams."

THE HATRED OF JOSEPH'S BROTHERS

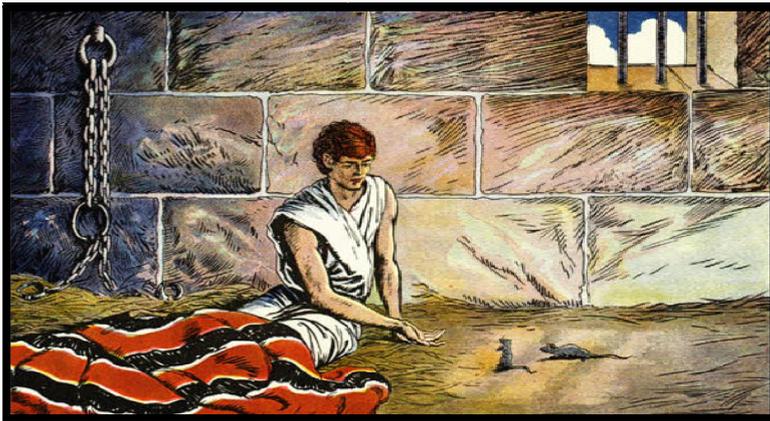
So great was their hatred that of the ten there was only one dissenting voice to this decision. It was that of Reuben, the oldest son. He suggested a compromise. "Let us not shed his blood," he said, "but let us put him into the pit alive." The record says that it was Reuben's intention to come back later and release Joseph. It was quickly agreed. When Joseph arrived he was rudely seized, stripped of his colorful coat, and thrown into a deep dry well from which he could not possibly escape unaided. Then, with the anguished cries and pleadings of Joseph ringing in their ears, they sat down to eat. The fact that they could eat under the circumstances shows the callousness of their hearts. Reuben, who was more compassionate, must have excused himself at this point to go and tend to his flocks because he was not present when a caravan of camels came in sight on its way to Egypt. Judah proposed an idea. Why not turn the situation to a profit? Why not sell Joseph as a slave instead of letting him die in the pit? So they let down a rope to Joseph who eagerly grasped it thinking his brothers had relented, only to find himself trussed up and sold like an animal to some

Midianite slave-traders for twenty pieces of silver. In those days the price of a full-grown slave was thirty pieces of silver.

Since Joseph was only seventeen, his price was twenty pieces. Again he cried and appealed to his brothers for mercy as he was dragged away by the traders, but they were too busy dividing the money. There would be two whole pieces of silver for each of them. Then Reuben, circling about, returned to the well to release Joseph. Finding him gone, he was genuinely distressed but it was too late. Then the brothers did an extremely cruel and callous thing. They took Joseph's coat of many colors, dipped and spattered it in the blood of a goat and took it to their poor old father who was so anxiously waiting for Joseph's return, the son he loved so much. "We found this," the brothers said. "Is it your son's coat?" Jacob reached the obvious conclusion. Joseph had undoubtedly been torn to pieces by a wild beast. There were lions and bears in that part of the country. His grief was profound. He refused to be comforted, saying, "I will go down to the grave, unto my son, mourning." The change in Joseph's life was drastic and complete. From being a beloved and favorite son, tenderly reared in his father's house, he suddenly was transported to the position of a slave in a foreign and heathen land. To this was added the bitter experience of witnessing the murderous hatred and cold-blooded cruelty of his own brothers as well as the homesickness and the thought of his father's grief and loneliness.

JOSEPH'S EXPERIENCES IN EGYPT

Upon reaching Egypt he was exposed for sale in the open market as was the custom of the time. The slave buyers were men of position and substance, members of nobility, officers of the king, wealthy merchants and large landowners. Slaves were expensive. We can imagine the slave-master expertly sizing up Joseph so obviously superior to the rest, saying: "Gentlemen, we have a very special item today. A young Hebrew! This man is from a superior race. He is not only strong, but very intelligent. Just look at his high forehead! He will make some fortunate purchaser an excellent and trustworthy servant. Gentlemen what am I bid?" That is how Joseph was purchased by Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and Captain of the Guard. Joseph had



inherited many fine qualities from his father. He had been reared in an atmosphere of strong faith in the God of Abraham. From infancy he had been -- imbued with the noblest precepts; he was honest, conscientious, and a faithful young man.

Absolute faithfulness was probably rare at the time as it is today. Joseph's master quickly noted it and gave Joseph more and more responsibility.

The record says that, "The Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand." This too was noticed by his master. When Joseph was about 22, he was made the manager of Potiphar's entire estate. He enjoyed Potiphar's complete trust and confidence. We read, "And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand." Joseph had occupied this position for about five years when calamity came. --Unintentionally he

caught the eye of Potiphar's wife. His steadfastness to principle angered her. She falsely accused him and he was cast into prison and made to appear guilty of a heinous crime: disloyalty to his master and benefactor. Shakespeare has described this situation saying, "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned." We read: "And Joseph's master took him, and put him into prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound." I don't think Potiphar, in his heart, really believed his wife's accusation against Joseph. If he had, he certainly would have killed Joseph. After all he was an officer of the king and Captain of the Guard; Joseph was only a slave. No one would have questioned him. Instead he imprisoned Joseph. The warden of the prison was happy to have someone with Joseph's administrative ability and he quickly put his talents to work. In a short time Joseph came to be in complete charge of the prison arrangements although he was himself a prisoner.

Once again we read: "The Lord was with him; and that which he did, the Lord made to prosper." Since this was the king's prison, the prisoners were not necessarily criminals. Sometimes they were political prisoners or merely temporary objects of the king's displeasure. One day, Pharaoh became angry at two of his officers, described as "the chief of the butlers, and the chief of the bakers." The chief butler or cup-bearer to the king was the highest officer of Pharaoh's household--a sort of a Royal Secretary. The chief baker was the manager of the culinary department and general steward of the Royal Family with its kitchen and supplies. They were confined in the same prison with Joseph, and Joseph was responsible for them. He therefore became well acquainted with them and learned much of the ways and customs of Pharaoh's court. This information would stand him in good stead later on.

JOSEPH INTERPRETS DREAMS

One morning Joseph noticed these two prisoners looked particularly unhappy and he tenderly inquired: "Wherefore look ye sad today?" Joseph's own experiences had made him tender-hearted toward others. He was able to enter into the degradations and sorrows of the other prisoners because of what he himself had been through. He noticed and was genuinely concerned that they were sad that morning. The chief butler and the chief baker told Joseph they both had dreamed dreams the previous night and were sad and worried because of what the dreams might mean. Joseph encouraged them to tell him their dreams suggesting that God through him might give them the interpretations. The butler told his dream first and God illuminated Joseph's mind to give him the meaning; he was to be pardoned by Pharaoh and restored to his butler's office within three days. Then Joseph made a pathetic plea to the butler, showing how much he yearned for his freedom. He said, "But think on me when it shall be well with thee; and show kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh; and bring me out of this house. For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews; and here also, have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon." Then the baker told his dream. Again God illuminated Joseph's mind with the interpretation. This time it saddened Joseph to tell it. He told the baker that within three days he would be hanged. Within three days both predictions were precisely fulfilled. The butler, restored to his former position, once again gave the cup to Pharaoh's hand. But he forgot Joseph and his wistful plea.

Joseph stayed in prison two years after that. He was now 30 years of age. Then one night Pharaoh dreamed two dreams in one night. These were not ordinary dreams that one takes as a matter of course. So vivid and impressive were they that Pharaoh knew they had special significance. In the first dream he saw seven fine cattle come

up to the river; a little later he saw seven very poor, lean cattle--the worst he had ever seen--come up. The lean cattle ate up the fat ones and looked none the better. In the second dream Pharaoh saw a fine stalk of corn grow up out of the earth bearing seven full, healthy, ears of corn. Then he saw another stalk come up with seven withered ears, good for nothing. As he watched the withered ears swallowed up the good ears and looked none the better.

Pharaoh summoned his wise men and magicians to --determine what the dreams meant. But to his great disappointment, not one of them could interpret the dreams for him. Then the chief butler, who was always at Pharaoh's side, finally remembered Joseph and told the king of the young Hebrew in prison who had so accurately interpreted his dream as well as the dream of the baker. I like to think that Joseph was praying, asking God for deliverance, when the summons came. The keeper of the prison came in with astonishment on his face. "Joseph! The King is calling for you! The great Pharaoh himself wants to see you!" Joseph was not really surprised. He had been expecting it for so long. With a heart full of thankfulness, he hastily bathed, shaved, and changed his clothes. It was with a calm assurance, born of faith in God, that Joseph faced Pharaoh, the mightiest monarch in the world. "I understand you have the ability to interpret dreams," Pharaoh said. "This ability is not in me," Joseph answered modestly. "It is God who shall give you an answer." "What a time to be modest!" someone might say. He had been a slave for ten years and in the dungeon for three years. Now when he had a grand opportunity to shine before the king himself, he threw it away. Yet modesty usually denotes greatness of character. This was not lost on the keenly perceptive Pharaoh. He told Joseph his dreams. The Lord again illuminated the mind of Joseph and he explained to Pharaoh that the two dreams referred to the same matter, given twice to emphasize its sureness. The interpretation was that there would be seven years of plenty--great plenty--in the land of Egypt. Then these would be followed by seven years of famine which would fully consume all the surplus of the plentiful years. Joseph offered the suggestion that the king appoint a trustworthy agent to buy all the surplus grain in seven years of plenty and to store it for use during the seven years of famine. Pharaoh was at once struck with the wisdom of this plan. So we read: "And Pharaoh said unto his servants: Can we find such a one as this is? A man in whom the spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph: Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet, and wise as thou art. Thou shalt be over my house, and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled. Only in the throne will I be greater than thou." So it came to pass that Joseph in one day stepped out of the lowest dungeon and was exalted to the rulership of Egypt, the greatest empire of those days. As Brother Russell expressed it: "He had a 14-year contract."

FAMINE TOUCHES JOSEPH'S FAMILY

The famine was general and severe throughout that region of the world. It included Canaan as well as Egypt. The land dried up and successive crops failed until there was not even seed left to plant. Word spread that there was no lack of food in Egypt. So Jacob directed his sons, who were by this time heads of families themselves, to go down to Egypt and buy wheat. But he did not send Benjamin, who was now his favorite son, with them. The ten sons arrived in Egypt. As aliens they were directed to Joseph who had been expecting them. He had known they would eventually have to come to him for food. That is probably why he had not tried to contact them before this. When brought before Joseph, his ten brothers bowed themselves before him, not recognizing him. To them he was the ruler of Egypt. As

they bowed before him Joseph remembered his dreams of the sheaves and the stars. He spoke to them through an interpreter asking if they were not really spies who had come to see how much wheat there was in Egypt so that they might bring an army to steal it. They explained their situation truthfully and upon questioning mentioned their father and their younger brother Benjamin. How Joseph's heart must have leaped to learn that after more than 20 years his father and his brother Benjamin were alive and well. But he did not identify himself. He kept his air of severity and finally agreed to sell them grain. But in order to obtain more later, they must first prove their truthfulness by bringing their youngest brother Benjamin along with them. Until that time, Simeon, one of the brothers, would be kept in prison as a hostage. At this point a single thought must have simultaneously passed through the minds of each of the ten brothers. It was the tragic memory of their 17-year-old brother Joseph in his coat of many colors with anguish of heart pleading, begging them for mercy. Then the brothers turned a deaf ear and sold Joseph for silver. The record states: "And they said, one to another, we are verily guilty concerning our brother; in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear.

Therefore is this distress come to us. And Reuben answered them saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, do not sin against the child, and ye would not hear? Therefore, behold, also his blood is required." The Brothers Experience Remorse They were in the presence of Joseph when they said these things, not knowing that he understood every word. Joseph was so overcome that he withdrew so that he could weep unobserved. His tears were tears of compassion and joy, joy at seeing the remorse of his brethren, to realize that the mellowing of the passing years had brought sincere repentance and change of character. Nevertheless he must try them further. He returned to them, took Simeon hostage, and sent them away. On the way home, when they opened their sacks to get food, they found the money they had paid for the grain in each of their sacks. When the brothers arrived at home with their wheat, they told their father Jacob the whole story, of their being suspected as spies by the governor, and why Simeon was not with them. Then they told their father that the money they had paid for the grain had been returned to them in their sacks of wheat. They told him that in order to obtain more wheat next time they must take Benjamin with them.

To this Jacob protested, saying: "Me have ye bereaved of my children. Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away?" It must have been a shock to the brothers to hear even their father Jacob echo their fears, that their crime against Joseph was responsible for their predicament, that this was retribution. When the supply of wheat brought from Egypt began to run low, Jacob urged his sons to go again for more. But they positively refused to do so unless Benjamin went along. Jacob protested strongly. Then Judah spoke up and became surety for Benjamin. Let us remember that it was Judah who many years before had, proposed selling Joseph as a slave. Now he pledged his own life for the safety of Benjamin. What a change had taken place in his heart. Jacob finally consented out of necessity. He sent them to the governor of Egypt with a present of honey, spices, nuts and almonds, and with double the money. He allowed Benjamin to go saying, pitifully, "And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother [Simeon], and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." When they arrived in Egypt, Joseph gave instructions that dinner should be served for them in his house and released Simeon to them. When they were ready to eat, Joseph came in robed as an Egyptian prince and again they bowed down to him. He tenderly inquired for their father.

He saw his brother Benjamin, his own mother's son, and yearned to embrace him. So deep was his emotion that he had to leave them for a while so they would not see his tears of joy. The brothers were shown to their seats at the table and were astonished to see they had been seated in the exact order of age and birthright. When they were served, they were further astonished to see that Benjamin was served five portions to their one. Did they resent it? Were they jealous as they had been of Joseph so long ago? Not a bit! They loved it. They laughed about it. The record says they "were merry with him." You may be sure Joseph noted this further evidence of their reformation. Joseph felt he must test them still further as to their sympathy for their father and for their loving interest in their youngest brother Benjamin. When their sacks were filled with grain, he arranged for his own silver cup to be concealed in Benjamin's sack. In the morning when the brothers were a short distance on their way home, he sent officers after them, accusing them of stealing his cup. They protested their innocence and invited the officers to search for the cup, saying: "With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen, or, slaves." The sacks were searched and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. What a rude shock it was! They had given their father a pledge of their own lives as surety for Benjamin; now, by their own word, Benjamin should die and they themselves --become slaves. The officers magnanimously proposed to take only Benjamin back with them as a slave and allow the others to proceed home. But they would not let Benjamin be separated from them, not for a moment. They all went back with him, stunned with grief. Were these the same men who had so long ago easily let Joseph go his lonely way a slave? Were these the same men who dipped his coat in blood and used it to break an old man's heart? When they got back to the palace, they fell before Joseph on the ground as he accused them. Words seemed useless. What could they say? How could they defend themselves against the evidence? It was hopeless; they knew they were through. Judah became their spokesman. "And Judah said: What shall we say unto my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves: God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants; both we, and he also with whom the cup is found." Thus he offered himself and his brothers including Benjamin to Joseph as slaves.

Joseph refused saying that only the one who had taken the cup should be his slave. "As for you," he said, "Get you up in peace, unto your father." Joseph was applying the final and most severe test on his brothers. As far as they knew Benjamin had stolen the cup. The brothers could reason that Benjamin should suffer the consequences; it was not their fault. They had their own families to think about. They might reason that food must be brought to them or they would starve. As for their father, he'd just have to understand the situation, that's all. Joseph desired to see if they would reason that way. This was the crucial test.

JUDAH HEART-FELT PLEA

Judah, speaking for them all, made one of the most pathetic, touching pleas, ever recorded in history. "Then Judah came near unto him, and said, O my lord, let thy servant I pray thee speak a word in my lord's ears; and let not thine anger burn against thy servant; for thou art even as Pharaoh. My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father or a brother? And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one, and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him.

And thou saidst unto thy servants, bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him. And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father, his

father would die. And thou saidst unto thy servants, except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more. And it came to pass, when we came up unto thy servant, my father, we told him the words of my lord. And our father said, go again, and buy us a little food. And we said, we cannot go down if our youngest brother be not with us. Then we go down and may see the face of the man when our youngest brother be with us. And thy servant, my father, said unto us, ye know that my wife bare me two sons; and the one went out from me, and I said surely he is torn in pieces, and I saw him not since. And if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. Now, therefore, when I come to thy servant, my father, and the lad be not with us, seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life; it shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die, and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant, our father, with sorrow to the grave.

For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever. Now, therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad, a bondman to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? Lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come to my father.” As Judah talked any lingering doubt in Joseph's mind melted away. They had indeed changed completely. They were now willing to sacrifice their own lives for their younger brother and to spare their father any anguish of heart. The time had come for him to identify himself. Sending all others out of the room and with tears streaming down his face, he made himself known to his brethren. Speaking in the Hebrew language he said: “I am Joseph your brother whom you sold into Egypt.” Can you imagine the amazement of his brothers? They felt a stab of guilt for what they had done to Joseph so long ago. They were ill at ease. Joseph quickly noted this and with what is a classic example of graciousness, he set their heart at ease. He said: “Now therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you, to preserve life . . . So now, it was not you that sent me hither, but God.” What largeness of heart Joseph had! What God-like forgiveness! Forgotten were the years of slavery, the years of the dungeon, the days and nights of loneliness yearning for his father's house. Now everything was all right!

Benjamin was the first one he embraced. This was his kid brother he loved so much. Then he embraced all his brethren and kissed them. They all wept tears of joy. Joseph immediately sent for his father and his brother's families and settled them comfortably in the land of Goshen. We can well imagine the touching tenderness of the reunion of Joseph with his father at long, long last. That is the story of Joseph, a beautiful, moving story. It is so rich in human emotion that it brings tears to our eyes to read it. It is also rich in prophetic significance. Do you realize what this means? It means that God made his plans in the minutest detail then supervised and overruled Joseph's every experience to illustrate portions of that plan. It is thrilling to realize how completely God is the Master of every situation, how thoroughly he controls and maneuvers the experiences of those with whom he deals.

JOSEPH A TYPE OF JESUS

Let us consider some of the prophetic and symbolic pictures God made from the life of Joseph. Joseph typified Jesus. As Joseph was the favorite son and constant companion of Jacob, Jesus was God's -- beloved son. Of him it is said that he was one brought up with God and daily his --delight. (Proverbs 8:30) As Jacob sent Joseph to his brethren in Dothan, the Heavenly Father sent his beloved son to the nation of

Israel. As Jesus himself said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matthew 15:24)

As Joseph's brethren hated him without justification, Jesus said of himself: "They hated me without a cause." (John 15:25) As Joseph's mission to his brethren was not well received but was rejected, so Jesus came unto his own but his own received him not." Also, "He was despised and rejected of men." (Isaiah 53:3) As Joseph's brethren were cruelly envious of him, we also read in Matthew 27:18 and Mark 15:10 that Jesus was delivered for envy. Joseph's brethren said of Joseph: "Come now, therefore, and let us slay him." In like manner the Jews plotted to kill -- Jesus, and shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" As Joseph was figuratively killed when cast into the pit by his brethren, Jesus was actually put to death by the Jews. As Joseph was sold in slavery at Judah's suggestion, so was Jesus sold by Judas for silver, thirty pieces of silver being the price of a slave. Faithful Joseph spent three years in prison; our Lord Jesus, notwithstanding his faithfulness, was three days in the prison-house of death. As Pharaoh raised Joseph up from prison to be next to him the ruler of Egypt, Jesus was on the third day delivered from death and raised up to power and great glory, next to Jehovah God on the throne of the universe. Our Lord Jesus said of himself after his resurrection: "All power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth." (Matthew 28:18) As Pharaoh decreed that all should bow down to Joseph and do him honor, so God decreed, "All men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father."--John 5:23 In the case of Joseph, disaster, treachery, and shame prepared the way for glory and honor as ruler of Egypt. So with --Jesus: his trying experiences proved him loyal to God and led to his exaltation.

As Hebrews states it: "[He] endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."--Hebrews 12:2 Joseph gave bread to all, purchasing for Pharaoh the land and the people. Jesus purchased mankind; during the Millennial age Christ will give life (himself--his merit) to all who desire it. As there was no life for the people except through Joseph as the representative of Pharaoh, there is no life for anyone in the world except in and through Christ representing the Heavenly Father. As Joseph's brethren who originally rejected Joseph finally recognized him, the Jewish nation who rejected Jesus and crucified him will, after many humbling experiences and ordeals including "Jacob's Trouble," finally recognize and accept Jesus. Joseph's brethren wept when Joseph revealed himself to them. So also we read: "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him." (Zechariah 12:10) As Joseph judged his brethren not according to what they had done to him in the past nor their sins of the past but according to their attitude of heart at the time, so the future judgment of the world will be according to the condition of men's minds and hearts at the time. These are some of the typical features of this story. There are many more. Do you think these parallels just happened by chance? You know they did not. This is the finger of God. These things were given for our encouragement and benefit to make us realize that we are not following "cunningly devised fables" (2 Peter 1:16), to know that we really have the truth.

PERSONAL LESSONS FOR US

Let us consider some of the personal lessons contained in the story of Joseph and his brethren. This is one of the stories my mother used to read to me from her Armenian Bible when I was a small child. I remember vividly how I used to be carried away by its high adventure. As the story unfolded, I imagined myself in every situation of Joseph. I couldn't quite understand the hatred of Joseph's brethren since

my own brothers were such fine fellows. But I cried when Joseph was cast into the pit and sold as a slave. I wept when his coat was dipped in blood and taken to his father. I alternated between joy and despair as Joseph was in turn favored and degraded. The supreme thrill for me came when Joseph was raised from the dungeon to the rulership of Egypt. When the story was finished and mother closed her Bible, I sat and mused. I would say to myself: Why couldn't a thing wonderful like that happen to me? Why couldn't God pick me for such care and such an exaltation? I didn't say this complainingly, but wistfully, yearningly; wishing it could be true; wishing with all my heart that I could be Joseph. Years later when the Lord drew me to the truth, the wonderful realization came to me that what happened to Joseph did happen to me. God had indeed selected me and as with Joseph, every incident of my life was noted by God and overruled for my good. I realized that I shall, finally, receive an -- exaltation to a rulership far greater than that of Egypt. This is true of each of us who are consecrated and running for the prize of the high calling. It is true of you.

The story of Joseph is the story of your life. As a member of the body of Christ Joseph represents you too! His experiences represent your experiences. As Jacob loved Joseph, God loved Jesus. So also it is written of you: "The Father himself loveth you." (John 16:27) As Joseph was hated of his brethren and as Jesus was hated by the Jews, Jesus said of you: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you."--John 15:18 As Joseph was raised up from the dungeon to the throne of Egypt, so was Jesus raised from death to the throne of God. It is written of us: "If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him." (2 Timothy 2:11,12) As the Lord was with Joseph, --supervising all his affairs, making everything come out all right, and as the Heavenly Father was with his son Jesus throughout his earthly ministry and finally glorified him, so we have the assurance "that all things work together for good to them that love God; to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28) As Joseph's experiences of adversity rightly exercised him, developing beauty of character, and as Jesus --demonstrated his obedience by the things which he suffered, it is written of us: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."--1 Peter 4:12,13 As Joseph distributed food to save lives and as Christ will in his kingdom administer the bread of life to all, we as members of his body will share with him in restoring life to all humanity. There are some intimate and heart searching lessons to be learned also. The first, and one of the principal lessons, is the effect of envy. We should never be -- envious. It is extremely disruptive and destructive. Under the evil influence of envy, normal people are led to do and say the most outrageous things. As James expresses it: "Where envying and strife are, there is confusion and every evil work." (James 3:16) This being true, you may be sure Satan fosters and encourages envy, seeking to disrupt and destroy the church. It is a sad fact that the brethren who are the most widely and effectively used by the Lord arouse the most envy. Let us shun this evil thing. At the slightest sign of it in our hearts, let us earnestly pray for its eradication. Allowed to grow, envy can destroy the new creature.

A LESSON ABOUT PRIDE

Joseph provides a valuable lesson on pride. We read in the account that "the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favor." (Genesis 39:21) This fact is expressed several times in the story. Even under adverse conditions he was favored in many ways. Joseph could have permitted these experiences to develop

a great deal of personal pride. He might have reasoned to himself that he was merely lucky, or that he was naturally bright, attractive and smart--that this was the secret of his success, that this was the reason his father loved him so much. He might have thought this was the reason that when he was sold as a slave he was bought by a good master, that it was his personal brilliance that caused him to rise to eminence in Poti--phar's house. He could have thought that it was his superior abilities that gave him the authority in prison, that it was his keenness of intellect that enabled him to interpret dreams. He might have thought that all these things made him stand head and shoulders above other men and hence he had earned and deserved his success as a matter of right. Joseph could have reasoned this way. It would have been quite human to do so. But he reflected the attitude of Jesus whom he prefigured. Jesus gave all the credit to God, saying: "I can of mine own self do nothing." (John 5:30) If Joseph had not taken this attitude, he would not have been exalted, but would have fallen instead. We read, "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." (Proverbs 16:18) So let us ascribe to the Lord every good thing we receive remembering: "Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." (James 1:17) Also: "For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south; but God is the judge; he putteth down one and setteth up another."--Psalms 75:6,7

Then there is the lesson of patient endurance. Sometimes when we are serving the Lord and the brethren to the best of our ability and when apparently we have the Lord's blessings and favor upon our affairs in a most marked degree, suddenly trouble may arise and adversity come upon us. The powers of darkness seem to triumph. We seem to be forsaken by divine providence. The Lord seems to have abandoned us. These are Joseph's experiences; Jesus too had such an experience when he cried: "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46) Anyone can have them. When this happens, let us react as did Joseph, with a quiet, persevering faith, doing the best we can from day to day not only waiting, but working and waiting.

Remember that Joseph did his best to effect his own deliverance from prison by asking the butler to mention his case to Pharaoh. But one of the most outstanding and heart-warming lessons of this story is the graciousness with which Joseph forgave his brethren. Seeing his brethren ill at ease when he revealed himself to them, his first and instant reaction was of pity and mercy. He was gracious in his forgiveness. He almost made them believe that they had done him a favor to sell him as a slave to Egypt! Listen to his loving words: "Be not grieved, or angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you, to preserve life . . . to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance . So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God!"

JOSEPH'S WORDS OF MERCY

Aren't those gracious words? His brethren knew they had been guilty of a great sin, a sin equivalent to murder. Joseph knew it too. But he also knew that the Lord had overruled it for the highest good. So that is the part he mentioned, and only that part. As he talked the guilty terror left their hearts and for the first time in 23 years their minds were at ease concerning Joseph. Let us, like Joseph, be merciful toward those who sin against us. Let us study to always give the gracious answer using loving words. Had Joseph been a saint of this Gospel age, begotten of the holy spirit and running for the prize of the high calling with all the revelations and admonitions of the Bible available to him, with a knowledge of the divine plan of the

ages revealing the character and purpose of God, his conduct would still be compatible with the very highest type of Christian development. But when we think of the circumstances and conditions under which his character was developed in that heathen land and with but a small revelation of God's character and plan (the Bible not yet written, the law and ordinances not yet given), we are amazed. When we think of this, what manner of persons ought we to be considering our great advantages every way? With all our advantages, would we have proven as noble and generous and gracious as Joseph under the same circumstances and conditions? These are things to ponder.

Does your heart glow when you consider the story of Joseph? Do you live the story? Are you able to identify yourself with Joseph's experiences, sympathizing with him in his difficulties and rejoicing with him in his successes? Do you think that what Joseph did was good, and right, and Godlike? Does it make you love and praise God the more? If so, this is the finest evidence that you are of the "Joseph" class whom the Lord loves and will exalt. We thank the Heavenly Father for the example of Joseph and of our Lord Jesus Christ whom he typified. May we be helped to copy the traits and characteristics illustrated so we too may be worthy of exaltation in due time.

JOSEPH'S SILVER CUP

(**Beauties of the truth; volume 12, Number 1, Feb 2001**)

- *Eugene Burns*

The story of Joseph is one of the longest in the Old Testament (14 chapters from Genesis 37 to 50). It is a soul-searching story mixed with villainy and great character. Both hatred and love drive the story while divine providence moves to fulfill God's purpose. In the end love wins out. The beautiful part of God's plan is that love triumphs in the end. There is also a happy ending for Jacob. He believed Joseph was dead only to find him alive in Egypt. When Jacob's life ends, in God's tender mercy, it is Joseph who closes his eyes. (Genesis 46:4) Jacob's body is carried back to the Promised Land and is buried in the cave of Machpelah with Abraham and Isaac. This confirmed his hope in God's promises. Jacob's Love for Joseph Joseph was the child of Jacob's beloved Rachel. He was younger than most of his brethren because Rachel had been barren for some time. When Rachel finally gave birth to Joseph, this tended to make him especially loved. And even more importantly, he was a delightful child. Consequently, they tended to spoil him. This may have been fine for Joseph, but it created jealousy among his brethren.

However, it is important that we understand Joseph's close association with Jacob was the very means by which he came to learn and appreciate his heritage in the Abrahamic promise. In all the years he spent in Egypt, probably not a day passed that he didn't recall these treasured promises. Perhaps he may have felt that in becoming the Savior of Egypt the Abrahamic promises were beginning to have a fulfillment. Jealousy is as Cruel as the Grave. Once jealousy starts to grow it can turn a normally good heart into an evil one. We all remember how Joseph's brethren hated him and finally plotted to kill him. Reuben, the oldest son, would not let his brothers kill Joseph. He suggested they throw Joseph into a pit hoping later to rescue him. Here we see how God turns the wrath of man into his own glory. God wanted Joseph in Egypt.

He allowed the wrath of Joseph's brothers to sell him into slavery. This was a mean and despicable thing to do. Brothers are supposed to stick together and help one another. That is one lesson we should keep in mind.

If we ever find ourselves wishing to injure another brother or sister, we certainly have not passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. The highest injury we do when love fails under the test is to ourselves. We must love our brethren. It may not always run with the grain of our old nature, but without love we are nothing. Joseph was sold for 20 pieces of silver, which was the price of a slave under 30 years of age--Joseph was seventeen year sold at the time. Jesus was sold for 30 pieces of silver because he was a mature man. The lesson is the same, except that we have allowed for an age difference. We are not told how they divided the money. In that there were ten brothers, each would have received two pieces of silver if divided equally. Perhaps some refused the money when the pangs of guilt began to trouble them.

JOSEPH DID NOT ALLOW HIS ENVIRONMENT TO SHAPE HIS CHARACTER

Modern thought tends to expect individual performance to be governed by environment. It is explained that people behave badly or well because of their environment. No matter what environment we are in, we can live on the higher plane of our ideals and hopes. That is the lesson of Joseph. He did not become a criminal because he was in jail with criminals. Because his brothers were mean and spiteful did not make Joseph that way. He maintained his integrity when there was no reward for doing so, only punishment. Why? Because he lived on a higher plane and would not allow himself to descend to the plane where tooth and claw governed. He did not plan to get even with those who had mistreated him. He had plenty of cause to be bitter and vengeful. He had been badly treated by his brothers, by Potiphar and his wicked wife, and then by the butler who forgot to mention him to Pharaoh for two years. The Genesis account tells us that God was with him and he prospered in all that he did.

It might not seem God was with him when being carried bound to Egypt. It may not seem that God was with him when Potiphar's wife accused him falsely. It may not seem that God was with him in jail for two additional years. Yet God was with him and he prospered in jail. He was a man of impeccable character and amazing ability to organize and supervise in a fair and brilliant way. Yet there he was in jail, spending some of the best years of his life as a slave or criminal. How many of us would be able to overcome under such adverse conditions? It is human to want God to remove the mountain for us, but God wants us to climb the mountain while he grants strength to do so. You know how Joseph was taken from prison to interpret Pharaoh's dream and then became ruler over Egypt. In Genesis 41:44 we read: 'I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.' Pharaoh here pictures God. Joseph pictures Christ. What a marvelous relationship came to exist between Pharaoh and Joseph. Think of what awesome power was held by a man who was just about thirty years old, who had languished as a slave and prisoner for 13 years. Imagine how far reaching was the power given him, that no one could lift up his 'hand or foot' except by Joseph's consent. Of course this was exaggerated language, but it meant to one and all that Joseph was in complete power and authority.

The seven years of plenty picture the grace and bounty of God laid up in Christ during the Gospel Age--the time of grace. The seven years of famine represent the Mediatorial Kingdom where Christ will reign supreme. In that time no one will be able to stand in his own righteousness. The Mediator will shelter them from the exact

demand of righteousness. Christ will sustain them. As the famine worsened, the people had to sell their possessions and themselves to be servants of Pharaoh. This pictures how all men will have to consecrate to God and will be totally consecrated to him when Christ delivers the Kingdom to the Father. Their only chance for survival will be accepting the terms that antitypical Joseph places upon them.

The world will need to be provided for by their Mediator whose righteousness will shelter them from standing before Jehovah's throne until they attain their own human perfection. Without antitypical Joseph's provisions they would all perish--they could never attain perfection or their own righteousness. We, by way of contrast, are able to consecrate our lives now. We gave up our possessions and our wills to God during the period of grace and hence our place will be with Joseph. Our task in the kingdom will be to make men poor to self-will and bring them under the will of God. In order to get Joseph's stores of food (which as they eat this food they will grow in righteousness), they shall have to unload themselves of their treasured resources and finally yield totally to God's sovereignty. (Genesis 47:24,25) Israel had to give one tenth (a tithe) to the priests and Levites. Joseph made the Egyptians give one-fifth to Pharaoh--a double tithe in God's Kingdom. I know none of this sounds very generous of Joseph, but these are the terms for everlasting life. The 'goats' will not like this arrangement. They will chafe a little under the Kingdom rule, and be eager to create better terms for themselves. What we must understand is that actually mankind will have four-fifths, which is abundantly more than they can ever use. If mankind would only devote one-fifth of their labors to the general good, how rich this world would be. Has God ever taken as much as a penny from earth? No! And he never will. However, God and Christ will count what is offered to benefit mankind as done unto them. 'Thou art even as Pharaoh'. (Genesis 44:18) These are Judah's words to Joseph. Yes, Christ exercises power and authority given by God. The Egyptians probably resented Joseph being in such power. I am sure they tried to by-pass his authority. However, Pharaoh would not let one Egyptian get out from under Joseph's authority--not one. Christ is our head now. We cannot expect the world to accept his headship then if we are not keeping the head now. Those who would aspire to be the bride of Christ must be eager to accept the headship of Christ now and forever. Those otherwise minded need not hope to be his bride.

THE STRUGGLE FOR SUPREME AUTHORITY

Much of the pain and suffering in the world comes from selfish men and the Devil trying to have authority. Nimrod's tower of Babel was built as a quest for world dominance and authority. God had to intervene and end that project which was driven by ambition. Nations have been at war as long as we have had human history. The mighty nations preyed on the weaker nations, dominating them and enslaving them. We see a similar spirit even among the apostles before Pentecost. In Mark 9:33,34 we read: 'What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.' They were ashamed to tell the truth of their discussion to the Master. It should not surprise us to see that later in the Christian Church a rivalry occurred among the bishops. As the bishops multiplied, the question soon arose as to who would be the bishop of bishops. Emperor Justinian ended the struggle by declaring the bishop of Rome to be head of all the holy churches.

From there the world sank into the Dark Ages ruled by priest craft and kings bent on controlling the world and men's minds. Satan has been represented in that cruel and bloody rule. The authority being exercised in this world is fatally flawed by

sin. Consequently some have come to the conclusion that all authority is to be resisted and deplored. This has given rise to excessive demand for human rights and privileges. In this quest for rights it often happens that all authority is resisted and people imagine that human sovereignty must be without limits. We live in a time when restraints of authority are being resisted and refused. We must not allow the anarchistic spirit in the world to get into our blood. We must remember that God is looking for those who love and appreciate the headship of Christ. Christ is to be our head every day of our lives. Even in the resurrection we will be under Christ's headship unto all eternity. The lesson of Joseph is that while he exercised total authority yet he kept himself fully under the authority of the Pharaoh, just as Christ always acknowledged the sovereignty of his Father. He had no uncontrolled ambitions. Unrestrained ambition destroyed Lucifer. It will also destroy any Christian not keeping the head. Genesis 45:8 reads: 'So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.'

This is a beautiful Scripture. Joseph had become the father of the nation--they lived only because of him. Christ will be the everlasting Father of the world. He will ultimately bring them to God. Did Joseph's fatherhood begin only in the famine? Did it begin in the years of plenty? Did it begin while he was enslaved and imprisoned where he had to learn to follow God's leading in harsh and painful conditions? Before greatness is humility. As the Lord's people we need to have the true nurturing spirit even now. How thankful we should be that we can share the common sufferings of the world in these years of grace and favor. This will enable us to bring the world to consecration. The practical lesson we learn from Joseph is that he was tough-minded with the people. His dealings with the people were to bring them into total subjection to the Pharaoh. This is not the permissive love now being advocated. Remember Romans 11:22: 'Behold the goodness and severity of God.' The modern concept of God is that he is all kindness without any severity. The God we represent is both good and severe. Let us keep this lesson before us.

JOSEPH'S ROUGH TREATMENT OF HIS BRETHREN

Joseph first accused his brethren of being 'spies' when they appeared before him. They had come to buy grain and found themselves in a lot of trouble. In Genesis 42:17-19: 'He put them all together into ward [prison] three days. And Joseph said unto them the third day: This do and live; for I fear God. If ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses.' Here we see how our Lord had placed his Hebrew brethren in Diaspora for three days (parts of three thousand-year days from Jesus' rejection of the nation until his second advent), and on the third (Millennial) day he lets them return to their homes to feed their families. This would cover the time from Christ's death until his return when he focuses on his brethren, again allowing them to return to their homeland with some provisions. When Joseph released them from prison, they confessed their sin in the Hebrew language, not knowing he understood them perfectly. As Joseph listened to their remorse and guilt he had to turn away as recorded in Genesis 42:24 because he could not hold back his tears. In our time I wonder how often many Jewish people have looked back on their painful history with sadness at what had happened to Jesus. I am sure there is remorse in many hearts, but they cannot openly confess this to Gentiles. It is only in the Hebrew tongue that this remorse is heard. Confession precedes true forgiveness.

We believe that process has started covertly and will reach its fulfillment in Zechariah 12:10: 'And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son.' This will be the moment when Joseph says to them: 'I am Joseph your brother.' What a happy reunion that was. In antitype it will be a great moment when Christ reveals himself to Israel and they fall into his open arms. However, Joseph does not reveal his true identity to his brothers when he let them out of prison. He does something very harsh. He singles out Simeon in Genesis 42:24 where we read he 'took Simeon and bound him before their eyes.' Why Simeon? Why should he be bound and cast into prison while the other brothers were allowed to return to their families? That was very painful and demeaning. Reuben is the only one who was innocent among the brethren. He declares his innocence in Genesis 42:22.

Why didn't Joseph bind Judah who suggested they sell him into slavery? (Genesis 37:27) We are not absolutely sure, but we think it was Simeon who bound Joseph when they sold him and who was the least inclined to pity Joseph as he pleaded with them. Now, Simeon himself was to feel the pain of being bound. He was to see his brothers return home free and he was confined in prison and bound. He was going to drink some of his own medicine, and it was not pleasant. Perhaps also Simeon had not shown sufficient contrition of heart and Joseph used this stern treatment to help him come to a truly penitent heart. Please notice one thing here: Judah and his brothers make no plea on behalf of Simeon; no one offers to stand in for him. In the antitype, we know who bound Jesus (typed by Joseph). It was the religious leaders who hated Jesus and sought on many occasions to kill him. Finally, with Judas' help they bound Jesus, delivering him to Pilate. Then they badgered Pilate into crucifying him. Five times Pilate said 'I find no fault in him.' Yet the religious leaders not only succeeded in binding Jesus, but also ridding themselves of him at least until he was resurrected.

Who might Simeon represent in our time, when the brothers of Joseph (Jesus) stand before him after being let out of the prison of Diaspora? In thinking about this it seems there is a class of Jews in our time who need some additional hard experiences. All the Hebrews standing before Joseph had rejected him. Simeon was put upon to receive additional harsh treatment. (Genesis 42:24) Who could he represent in our time? It seems that Jews who join the nominal church, the false representation of Christ's Kingdom, are going to have extra trouble. They are going to be bound in Egypt or in Babylon. Now, I am not speaking of the Messianic Jews who accept Jesus as the Messiah but who do not want to affiliate with the churches and their historic cruelty to the Jews. They just want to believe in the Messiah apart from Christendom and apart from the Trinity concept.

We think Simeon might represent Jews who accept the Trinity Christ, the burning hell-fire Christ, and the desire to make common cause with the false Christian churches, mostly in the evangelical churches. The Jews who have become a part of Babylon will find themselves in extra hardship when it collapses. They will be bound in that system incurring God's judgment. They may indeed picture Simeon in our time. Yes, the Simeon class is bound in Christendom while his brothers are back in their homeland feeding their families and Jacob. The nine brothers are sent home with the proviso that they bring Benjamin back with them. *Joseph Blessing His Brethren* The Second Meeting The next meeting with Joseph occurs when they stand before him with their brother Benjamin, Joseph's full brother. The requirement that they bring Benjamin was most difficult to fulfill. (Genesis 42:16,19) You know how it

broke Jacob's heart to have to send Benjamin to Egypt, but the famine left him no choice. Benjamin pictures the Great Company just as Joseph pictures Christ.

Joseph singled out five brethren to represent ten of his brethren. (Genesis 47:2) We read: 'And he took some of his brethren, even five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh.' This confirms the rich man and Lazarus story where five brethren depicted ten tribes. (Luke 16:19-31) This second meeting of Joseph's brethren with him takes place in antitype when the antitypical Benjamin, the Great Company, comes before Christ (Joseph) in conjunction with the nation of Israel. It is interesting to notice that Benjamin, while he represents the five foolish virgins, did not reject his brother Joseph. He was innocent of the crime of his brothers. Benjamin loves his brother Joseph, just as the Great Company loves Christ and they also build on that Rock. The five portions Benjamin received in Joseph's festive hall pictured a mark of special favor. (Genesis 43:34) Notice how Joseph when he laid eyes on Benjamin said, 'God be gracious unto thee, my son. And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother'. (Genesis 43:29,30) Here we see Christ yearns for his brother, the Great Company. However, he is not ready to reveal himself to them.

JOSEPH'S SILVER CUP

The plot thickens here. Joseph fills his brothers' bags with money but lo and behold, he puts his silver cup (probably the word of truth concerning natural Israel and the Promised Land) in Benjamin's bag. This is devastating to everyone. They are all arrested and it now looks as though they must return without Benjamin. Judah, the very one who suggested they sell Joseph into slavery now puts his own life on the line. Joseph insists that the one who possessed his cup would be his servant. We know the Great Company will serve before the throne 'day and night in his temple.' In Genesis 44:18,33,34 we read: 'Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee speak a word in my lord's ears, let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou art even as Pharaoh.... Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? Lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father. 'This was the moment Joseph waited for. Judah confesses his sins to Joseph in Genesis 44:16.

His willingness to take Benjamin's place as a servant overcomes Joseph. Remember that it was Judah who originally suggested they sell Joseph into slavery, but now he has matured into a beautiful person. He cares about his father Jacob and his brother Benjamin. It took great character to offer himself in slavery in Benjamin's stead. Remember that no one offered to stand in for Simeon. Of course, Judah does not have to go into slavery. His beautiful heart condition at last frees him. This is rather exciting. In Revelation 16, 'seven angels' pour out 'seven golden bowls'--these all come from the temple 'filled with God's glory.' The 'seven angels' are then given 'golden bowls' of divine judgments. These fill up the wrath of God. Benjamin is not included in the work of these 'seven angels' who come from the temple--the true Church of God. Gold is associated with the divine. Notice that Benjamin, picturing the Great Company, is given Joseph's silver cup. Hence silver is identified with the Great Company. In Revelation 16:15 we have our Lord's message to the Great Company: 'Behold, I come as a thief, Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.' This is a message to the Great Company to keep on their robe of righteousness when everything around them is collapsing. Now we see Joseph planted his silver cup in Benjamin's bag just as Christ does with the Great Company. It created a great time of trouble and perplexity for

Benjamin. He seemed doomed because he had Joseph's silver cup. The Great Company also will be in great trouble because of the 'silver cup' truths planted in their 'bag.' Just as the silver cup is hidden in Benjamin's bag, so Christ will plant his silver truths on the Great Company, and they will be in possession of some important truth, which normally belonged only to Joseph--Christ. What might this be? I think the truth the Great Company will have is the truth pertaining to natural Israel. Hence the Great Company will know that any attempt to destroy Israel will be doomed. When Gog and Magog come down against Israel, the churches will bless this doomed invasion. However, the Great Company, will know this mission is doomed to failure. They will speak out against this and bring down wrath upon themselves. Where does Judah come in? The faithful ones in natural Israel picture Judah, who at some point, may speak out and try to shield the Benjamin class, the Great Company, from harm as the nominal systems turn against them. This will be the great turning point, when the antitypical Joseph sees the remorse in Judah's heart and he can no longer hide himself from his natural brethren.

We read in Genesis 45:1,2: 'Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.' He then says to them, 'I am Joseph your brother.' Joseph tries to hide his yearning for his brethren from the Egyptians, the world, but soon all realize that Christ has revealed himself to his natural brethren. Isn't that beautiful? When Gog's invasion collapses, the Great Company will leave this earth in great tribulation. Then we read in Ezekiel 38:23: 'Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord.' Thus Joseph's [Christ's] love for his natural people will come to be known to the entire world. Notice that it is not until Judah [natural Israel] tries to shield Benjamin [the Great Company in some unique way], that Joseph [the antitypical Christ] will reveal himself to his brethren. Christ prepares his natural brothers in the flesh, Israel, over a long period of time to receive him. However, our lesson indicates that at the end he reveals himself very suddenly and spontaneously to his natural brethren. Joseph seems to have singled out Benjamin for special trial in possessing his silver cup of truth concerning natural Israel. He also seems to give his brethren both blessings and grief up until the time that Judah offers to take Benjamin's place. (Remember, Benjamin is Joseph's full brother, a part of the Church of the firstborn.)

This story seems to warrant expecting antitypical Judah to make some noble effort to modify the sufferings of the Great Company. I mention this to open another window to prophecy that lies immediately before us. There is little doubt that the story of Joseph is a type in many ways. Perhaps the typical story was given to help us understand the relationship between the Great Company, Christ, Judah, Gog's invasion and Armageddon. What better way could 'Judah' show its true remorse and beautiful heart condition but to act in a noble way to shield Christ's brethren, the Great Company. This action will not save the Great Company. Remember Joseph said 'the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant'. (Genesis 44:17) The Great Company will serve God in his temple before the throne. It is Judah's plea that causes Christ to open his heart to his natural brethren.

NO SOWING OR PLANTING FOR SEVEN YEARS

It is important to know that one of the reasons they survived the seven years of famine is that they did not sow or plant for seven years. If they had done so, they

would not have survived. I am certain that panic gripped the hearts of the Egyptians as the famine deepened. It would be natural for them to want to plant grain hoping for a harvest. Only by being subject to Joseph could they survive. In Genesis 45:6 we read: 'For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing [plowing, RSV] nor harvest.' Then when they do plant at the end of the seven years of draught, we read in Genesis 47:23: 'Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh: lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land.'

That is when they must give a fifth of their harvest to Pharaoh, to God, or really for the common good. One last comment comes from Paul in Hebrews 11:22: 'By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.' This was a significant gesture on Joseph's part. He could easily have had a great monumental burial in Egypt. His name was great and the nation owed him their lives. However, Joseph had never forgotten the promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Under no condition was he going to rest in Egypt. The story of Joseph proves that people who once turned mean and ugly can be turned around into beautiful caring people. What a man is should not interfere with what he might be once he chooses to repent and reform. The poet has said: 'The saddest words of tongue or pen, are the words it might have been.' What people are, and what they might be, may be two different things. Everything depends on making the right choices and the right decisions. People who make the wrong choices and the wrong decisions will look back with broken hearts at what might have been had they done differently. We do not want to be 'what might have been' 'Christians'.

GETTING BACK TO BENJAMIN

We are actually more concerned with Benjamin than with Simeon. After all, Benjamin is our brother in Christ. Why would antitypical Joseph plant his silver cup in Benjamin's bag to bring such distress upon him and all the natural Israelites? Remember when Joseph saw his brother Benjamin, his soul yearned for him and he had to leave the room to seek a place to weep. (Genesis 43:30) He thereafter gave five portions to Benjamin his brother! He seemed extravagantly pleased with Benjamin. Then he places his silver cup in Benjamin's bag, making him look like a thief. None of this seems to add up. Benjamin was not really in danger of literally being a slave to Joseph, was he? Joseph surely would not allow any harm to come to his brother whom he loved. Joseph knew that his brothers had brought Benjamin to them under great restraint from his father Jacob. Certainly Joseph was not going to do anything to give his father further pain. This silver cup was planted on Benjamin to test his brothers. What would they do if it looked like harm were to befall Benjamin?

Jesus, the Forgiving One To Joseph's great pleasure Judah, his very own brother who suggested they sell him into slavery, turned into a loving and caring person. When Judah realizes they might have to return without Benjamin, he fears for his father Jacob. They robbed him of his son Joseph. They cannot return without Benjamin so Judah offers himself as a substitute for Benjamin. At this point Joseph cannot hide himself from his brothers for another moment. While he orders out all the Egyptians, he cries so loud that everyone in Egypt hears him. This, of course, is a type of Christ. The antitypical Joseph apparently waits to see his natural brother, Judah, the leading tribe of Israel, not only show verbal remorse, but express a willingness to suffer as a bondsman, to save his brother Benjamin. That is the moment when Christ will reveal himself to all his brethren and to the world. Remember, up until this point

Joseph had been a little hard on them. He repeatedly had placed them in stressful and worrisome positions, even though all the while he proved to be a great benefactor to them. It was only through his generosity they had provisions to live on. How this might develop in the days ahead we may not be sure.

It is possible that when the Armageddon climax is reached and the nations of Christendom are about to descend upon Jerusalem, that the truth about Israel will be found coming forth from Benjamin's [the Great Company's] bag. The nominal churches will be distraught with the Great Company for censuring their crusade against Israel and Jerusalem. It may be at this very moment that some of the faithful in natural Israel will speak up in defense of the Great Company. It will not save the Great Company because they must come up through 'great tribulation' to finally overcome and stand before the throne of God. The whole point of this lesson is that Christ will not reveal himself to natural Israel and to the world until 'Judah' picturing the faithful in natural Israel offers to stand in for Benjamin, the Great Company. That is the great moment when Christ will say, 'I am Joseph your brother. In conclusion, dear brethren, remember why we are here today. The truth of God is everything to live for, and it is also everything to die for.

AMEN!

THE TIME, MY SOUL, IS SHORT!

No time to linger by the way,
No time for ease, no time for play;
No time for earthly loves or joys,
No time for worldly cares or toys--
The time, my soul, is short!

No time to murmur or complain,
No time to heed the heart's dull pain;
No time for tears or mournful song,
No time to ask, How far? How long?--
The time, my soul, is short!

Ah, yes! 'tis short--yet time enough
To run thy course, so steep and rough;
Just time to reap "the fields," so white,
Before the coming of "the night"--
Just time, my soul, just time!

Just time to make thy heart more pure,
Just time to make thy "calling sure,"
Just time to enter through "the door,"
To reign with Christ for evermore--
Just time, my soul, just time!

- GERTRUDE W. SEIBERT.



