

# Joseph, the Exalted Lord

Rev. D. H. Kuiper

(The reader is encouraged to refer to Genesis 41:41-44 and Genesis 47: 14-20)

Like a golden thread woven intricately through the entirety of Joseph's life is the beautiful working of Divine providence. To be sure, the life of every man reveals the unfolding of God's plan. We often fail to see that because rarely do we see the picture of life in its completeness. But the Lord has left us examples in Scripture by which He displays the truth that in and through all things He realizes His high purpose. The life of Joseph is a lucid and impressive illustration of this. It was the Lord's intention, eternally, to elevate Joseph above his brethren and to make him the exalted Lord of the entire world of that day! This had been revealed to Joseph as a youth already, and without knowing the details he believed that God would bring it to pass.

Notice how the Holy Scriptures place the emphasis upon the directing, governing hand of God. "And the Lord was with Joseph and he was a prosperous man." (Gen. 39:2.) "The Lord blessed the house of Potiphar for Joseph's sake." (Gen. 39:5) "The Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison; and the Lord was with him and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper." (Gen. 39:21) And after Joseph is second in command in Egypt, he explains to his brethren, "So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God." (Gen. 45:8) We simply have to view the prosperity of this young saint as the fruit of the power and grace of God in whom he trusted so steadfastly!

God gave to Joseph several spiritual virtues: a very submissive nature, a strong faith, enduring patience, and cheerful industry. Humanly speaking, what a different outcome this history might have had, if Joseph were an impatient skeptic, who was quick to revolt when confronted with opposition, and had to see with the natural eye before he would act. But that is exactly the wonder of God's working, don't you see? He not only determines the end from the beginning, but He also determines and supplies the means to that end!

If you read the passages cited at the beginning of this article, you could not but be impressed with the high position to which God elevated Joseph in the land of Egypt! He wore the king's ring, golden chain, and clothing; he rode in the second chariot and before him all men were exhorted to bow the knee; and Pharaoh made it plain to him that without Joseph no man could lift up his hand or feet in all the land of Egypt! With that power and authority vested in him, Joseph subjected the entire land to the strictest monetary policy one could possibly imagine. After seven years of plenty had past and the seven years of famine had become a reality, Joseph gathered all the money in the land, then all the cattle, then all the land became Pharaoh's, next the people became the slaves of the king, and finally Joseph passed out seed for crops and of the increase exacted twenty percent for Pharaoh! Bear in mind that Egypt was the greatest world power of that day, and Joseph with the power given him by Pharaoh was the highest earthly ruler to be found anywhere. Admittedly Joseph ruled with a heavy hand in that high position. His administrative and financial policies have often been criticized. It must be admitted that Joseph ruled without laxity; for every bit of meal given, he required payment. In this way he spared the

land from utter ruin. And he certainly ruled over the land of Egypt with a rod of iron! (See Psalm 2:9, which applies to Joseph as a type of Christ.)

We must notice, however, that Scripture includes another feature of Joseph's rule that reveals quite the opposite attitude and demeanor. To Egypt also came the brothers of Joseph, and after the young ruler had revealed himself to them, the aged Jacob and all that he had also came down to Egypt, settled in the land of Goshen, and became subject to Joseph! The family of Jacob represented the Church of that day; to them were given exceeding great and precious promises, and upon them God bestowed choice, covenant blessings. But because the famine also affected the promised land of Canaan, the Church came down to Egypt and became subject to the exalted ruler of the land, Joseph.

Over his brethren, the church, Joseph did not rule with a rod of iron, but graciously. He did not exact from them the last farthing, but he refused to allow them to pay for anything. We have already seen how they found their money in the mouths of their sacks. In Genesis 45 we read that Joseph instructed them that "They are not to regard their stuff, for the good of all the land of Egypt is theirs". And Pharaoh says to Joseph, "The land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and thy brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell." Thus, they live in the best of the land and they make no payment of any kind. How different is the treatment of the sons of Jacob from the treatment the Egyptians themselves received.

So Joseph rules over both the church and the world! He whose way had been through the deep, whose life for the past twenty years had been filled with grief and suffering, is now honored and respected! He ran his race with patience, with faith he clung to his God, and when the day of reckoning comes, he is marvelously rewarded by his God! It is true that his faith receives another reward when he enters into his heavenly reward. In fact, the honor conferred upon him in Egypt is but a picture of what awaited him in heaven. But if the earthly exaltation of Joseph is great, what shall the heavenly be? Truly, God is good to them that put their trust in Him!

The Gospel of this history for the Church today is simply this; what God has done for Joseph He has promised, and will do, for every single one of His children. As God led Joseph from being an outcast in Canaan to the Lord of all in Egypt, He displays to us that He will raise up all those cast out by the world to make them lords over all who will reign forever and ever. "The meek shall inherit the earth." (Matt. 5:5) Just as surely as the proud shall be abased so surely shall the humble be exalted in due time. What happened to the young saint Joseph so long ago shall happen to everyone who is united to Jesus Christ by faith. This may be difficult for us to believe, since we live in a world where wickedness is everywhere present, and where nothing seems able to stand before the onslaught of sin. And as the world develops in sin the church appears to be more and more helpless. But who are we to say that things are hopeless? When Joseph sat in Egypt's prison, did it ever seem possible that he would rule over his brethren? Yet the Lord brought that very thing to pass! The power of the Lord is never diminished, nor is His arm shortened, that He cannot exalt and save. Although we can only expect a cross in this world, yet faith is confident of ultimate and complete victory over all the forces of sin and evil. "Evil doers shall be cut off, but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place and it shall

not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” (Psalm 37:9-11)

At the present time we seem to be in bondage, we seem to be dispossessed, we seem to occupy a precarious, unattractive position. But the day of our perfect liberation is at hand, and in a little while we shall be raised up to reign from on high! Be patient until the day of our Lord! In that day we shall receive a position far greater than Joseph ever received in Egypt. He had great honor, but he lost it after seventy years through death. But not even death can rob us of the glory that is promised the Church of Jesus Christ; she shall reign with Him forever and ever!

The absolute certainty of this promise lies in the fact that it is God's promise and in the fact that Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, is even now in highest glory. All those that are one with Him shall surely follow Him into that reward!! Isaiah writes of the Savior: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and we hid as it were our faces from Him. He was despised, and we esteemed Him not." Indeed, far more cruelly than Joseph, the Christ was hated and made to suffer. Because He was holy and we were corrupt, we affixed Him to the terrible cross. Yet Jesus opened not His mouth. Such patience!! Such waiting on the Lord! We can only marvel!

But notice the wisdom of God. As Joseph was sold into Egypt that God might preserve a seed alive unto Himself, so also Jesus was delivered to the cross with the very same purpose in mind! It was evil of Joseph's brothers, and it was evil of the Jews and Gentiles of Jesus' day; but God meant it for good! The deepest humiliation was necessary in order that Christ might reach the highest possible glory prepared for Him by the Father. (See Phil. 2: 1-9)

It may not appear that Jesus reigns, according to the outward evidence of things. The kingdoms of the earth still rage. The world continues to show itself dead set against Christ, His righteousness, kingdom, and people. Maybe one is inclined to doubt that the anointed of God does, indeed, have universal supremacy. Then we turn to God's own Word which cannot lie, and which always penetrates to the heart of things. We find in Rev. 19:1, 4, 6, "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia: Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God. . . And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. . . And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thundering, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." What believer of the Bible can ever doubt but that God is on His throne, ruling over all things through Jesus Christ, the worthy Lamb that was slain!

Jesus is Lord! He rules over the world of unbelief with a rod of iron, dashing them to pieces like a potter's vessel. The Lord laughs, the Lord regards it an amusing thing that the wicked imagine they can come against Christ with impunity or any success. But Christ also rules over His Church by His wonderful grace and by the indwelling of His Spirit. He makes the Church willing to stand in the midst of a hostile world as representatives of His cause. He gives grace to be faithful, to be pure. That grace is sufficient day by day so that the pilgrim believer knows that the day is at hand when Christ comes to make the crooked straight and the rough places plain, to settle all the accounts.

When the Lord comes, He will dispossess all the kingdoms of this world, and He will give freely to His people the new heavens and the new earth. There can be no doubt about that.

Christ has the victory. And since we are united to Him by faith, faith is the victory that overcomes the world. We understand that all things are ours, we are Christ's and Christ is God's. Be patient. Be obedient and holy. Be faithful. The reward is certain, and the crown is sure.

Originally Published in:  
Vol. 45 No. 4 April 1986