

Sabbath School Lesson #12 – Joseph, Prince of Egypt – 11-17 June 2022

Christ would have us learn that God was with Joseph. But first the memory text: “And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt” (Genesis 41:41). We learn this from the words of Stephen: “And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph in Egypt; but God was with him, and delivered him out of all his afflictions” (Acts 7:9-10). When was God with Joseph? God was with him when his brethren cast him bound into the pit in the wilderness, and when he went down to Egypt as a slave. God was with him when he was a bondservant in the house of Potiphar, and He was with him when he resisted the temptations of his mistress. God was with him also when he was in prison, no less than when his captivity ended, and he was made ruler over all the land of Egypt. God did not come to him, but He went with him. He did not merely come to deliver him from his afflictions, but He went into prison with him. It was because God was with him that he was delivered. Let this fact be remembered, that the Lord goes to prison when His servants go there for His sake. Christ said that when He comes, He will say to some, “I was in prison, and ye came unto Me,” and to others that they did not visit Him when He was in prison.

There are many people who think much of being with the Lord in heaven, when He comes, but who do not realise the necessity and the blessedness of being with Him here in this present time. And it is a mistake to suppose that we have the presence of the Lord only when everything seems to favour us. When Jacob said, “All these things are against me” (Genesis 42:36), God was with him as much as when he was in Bethel or Peniel, and was preparing, out of those afflictions, the means of his future sustenance. So very often it is the case that we can have God with us only by suffering affliction. Joseph, for instance, could not have kept God with him without going to prison. He might have kept out of prison if he had been willing to deceive his master, and sin against God, but not otherwise. Now it is certain that if Jesus of Nazareth had been in the place of Joseph, He would have done as Joseph did, and would have been obliged to suffer imprisonment for refusing to sin. Indeed, it was only because Jesus was with him, that he resisted the temptation and went to prison. In Egypt, we can be sure Joseph had the choice, therefore, of going to prison with the Lord, or of staying out of prison without the Lord. Joseph did not hesitate a moment in choosing.

Sunday: Joseph’s Rise to Power – In Genesis 41, what is the place of wisdom in that Joseph rose to power, and what was his source of wisdom? The fear of the Lord is the true source of wisdom; humility is a part of that wisdom. Joseph had the fear of God continually before his eyes, and God gave him divine wisdom. When called before Pharaoh to interpret his dream, Joseph said: “It is not in me; God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.” Note the similar answer that Daniel gave when he went in to interpret Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Daniel 2:28-30). Pharaoh showed his appreciation of the fact that true wisdom comes from God to those who are His servants in truth, by saying of Joseph when he had advised that men be appointed to preserve food for the time of famine: “Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?” He knew that there was no use in looking further. A man to whom God had given such wisdom, was one to carry out the work He had advised.

Monday: Joseph Confronts His Brothers – In Genesis 42 Joseph seeks to prove his brothers when he asked them to bring Benjamin as proof they were not spies, and when he kept Simeon in the Egyptian prison until Benjamin is brought. Jacob hesitated allowing them to take Benjamin, fearing that the youth will also be lost as supposedly Joseph was lost. But had the brothers of Joseph learnt from their past? Had Reuben learnt from his past, when he attempts to offer his two sons to compensate Jacob for the loss of Benjamin? – he said to Jacob, “Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee” (Genesis 42:37). Reuben had not learnt the lesson of love. “*And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing*” (1 Corinthians 13:3). How is it, since love is giving, that one can bestow all his goods upon the poor, and give his body to be burned, and not have love? – simply because “the flesh profiteth nothing.” The giving of goods is not the giving of one’s life. Gifts may be made with a selfish motive – to secure applause or honour. Christ loved us, and *gave himself* for us. But how about giving the body to be burned? – the body is not the sum of the man; and, moreover, nobody would

be benefited by the burning of another's body. The slaying of Reuben's two sons could not compensate Jacob for the loss of Benjamin: but Judah showed love, in that he offered himself as a living substitute – he said to Jacob, "I will be surety for him" (Genesis 43:9).

Tuesday: Joseph and Benjamin – In Genesis 43, what lessons do we learn of Joseph keeping Simeon in prison until they bring Benjamin? He was testing his brethren, to see if they had changed. His brothers did not know that when they spoke in the Hebrew he could hear, for until then he spoke to them through an interpreter. They did not yet know he was Joseph whom they had sold. But God was working through Joseph to save Israel. What about the lesson from reaction of Jacob to give Benjamin? When demand to take Benjamin to Egypt was told to Jacob, he did not at first appreciate it work for good. How different things look to us after the bitter experience has passed! When Jacob heard that Simeon had been kept a captive in Egypt, he said, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me" (Genesis 42:36). But things were not against him; on the contrary, they were all working for him – working out a great deliverance, and a peaceful, happy old age. We can see it clearly enough; yet when our trials come, we complain, just as though ours were exceptions to the rule that "all things work together for good to them that love God" (Romans 8:28). If we were absolutely sure that good would result, we should bear the trial and the pain uncomplainingly; but in spite of all the assurances and all the examples of God's word, we persist in looking at things as they seem now, instead of from the standpoint of eternity. What about us; does anybody suppose that when we stand by the river of life in the paradise of God, we shall have any regrets or sorrow for what we have suffered here? – of course not. We know that we shall not. Then what is the use of indulging in such regrets here? We know that if God be for us, nothing can be against us, and that all things work – are now working – together for good to them that love God. Moreover, it is our privilege and our duty to look at things from the eternal side, instead of from the temporal side; for God is our dwelling-place, and He inhabits eternity.

Wednesday: The Divination Cup – In Genesis 44, what did Joseph intend to achieve by the so-called divination cup? We are told: "They followed the steward to the palace, and, finding the prime minister still there, they fell before him on the ground. "What deed is this that ye have done?" he said. "Wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine? Joseph asked this question to draw forth from his brethren an acknowledgment of their past wrong course, that their true feelings might be more fully revealed. He did not claim any power of divination, but was willing his brethren should believe that he could read the secret acts of their lives. Judah answered, "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. Behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found." The reply was, God forbid that I should do so; but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father" – EG White {ST January 29, 1880, par. 14}.

Thursday: "I Am Joseph Your Brother" – In Genesis 45, how did it all end between Joseph and his brothers? We are told: "Joseph was satisfied. He had proved his brethren and had seen in them the fruits of true repentance for their sins. He was so deeply affected that he could no longer conceal his feelings, and he gave orders that all but these men should leave the hall; then he wept aloud, and cried out, "I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?" His brethren could not answer him, for surprise and terror. They could not realize that the ruler of Egypt was their brother Joseph, whom they had envied and would have murdered, but were finally content to sell as a slave. All their ill-treatment of him passed before them. They remembered how they had despised his dreams; and had labored to prevent their fulfillment. Yet they had acted their part in fulfilling these dreams; and now they stood before him condemned and amazed. As Joseph saw the confusion he said to them, "Come near to me, I pray you;" they came near. And he said, "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life." He nobly sought to make this occasion as easy for his brethren as possible. He had no desire to increase their embarrassment by censuring them. He felt that they had suffered enough for their cruelty to him, and he endeavored to comfort them" – Ellen G White {ST January 29, 1880, par. 16}.