

---

# GENESIS: IT ALL STARTS HERE

## *THE GOD WHO DEMOTES & PROMOTES*

---

A message presented by Pastor Marc Minter  
to First Baptist Church of Diana, TX on November 6, 2016

### INTRODUCTION

---

The United States presidential election has caused no small amount of discomfort in America. Among many American evangelicals, the discomfort has turned to anxiety and then to panic. This is true for voters of all kinds. In this timely message, we will observe God's providence in Joseph's life, and we will seek to apply biblical truth to our lives today. No matter how the election turns out this week, if we look to the Scriptures and the providential God of all creation, then we can find great hope and rest.

### **GENESIS 39:1-41:57**

**39:1** Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. **2** The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. **3** His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands. **4** So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. **5** From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had, in house and field. **6** So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate.

Summarizing verses 7 through 20: Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph, but Joseph would not sin against God, and ruin the marriage bed in such a way. However, Potiphar's wife was persistent, and she finally accused Joseph of trying to violate her. Potiphar became angry with Joseph, and he threw him into prison.

**39:21** But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. 22 And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. 23 The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the LORD was with him. And whatever he did, the LORD made it succeed.

Summarizing chapter 40, verses 1-19: While Joseph was in prison, the Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker were also thrown in there. Each had a dream, and Joseph explained to each one that God was predicting the future in their dreams. Joseph told them that the cupbearer would be given his job once more, and the baker would be killed. Joseph only asked that the cupbearer tell the Pharaoh that he was wrongfully imprisoned.

**40:20** On the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, he made a feast for all his servants and lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants. 21 He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand. 22 But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them. 23 Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

Summarizing chapter 41, verses 1 through 36: After two years, the cupbearer finally remembered Joseph when Pharaoh had some dreams of his own. God revealed to the Pharaoh that there were going to be seven years of severe famine ahead, but only after seven years of great harvests. Joseph was the one God used to explain Pharaoh's dreams, and God also favored Joseph with a plan of action in response to this gracious revelation of knowledge. Joseph said told Pharaoh that it would be wise to save up grain during the seven good years, so that there would be enough to last throughout the seven bad years.

**41:37** This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. 38 And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?" 39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. 40 You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you." 41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." 42 Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck.

43 And he made him ride in his second chariot. And they called out before him, “Bow the knee!” Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt.

Summarizing verses 44 through 55: Joseph put the plan into action, and Pharaoh could not have been happier to have Joseph in charge of everything. Joseph had two sons (Manasseh and Ephraim), and he named each of them as a memorial to God’s blessings upon him. Success and blessing was enjoyed by all, and when the famine came, Joseph was the hero of the day.

**41:56** So when the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. **57** Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth.

## MESSAGE OUTLINE:

---

**(1) SEVERAL BRIEF OBSERVATIONS**

**(2) THE TYPOLOGY IS TOO RICH TO NEGLECT HERE (JOSEPH PICTURES CHRIST)**

**(3) DESPITE ALL THE PLAYERS, GOD IS WHO DEMOTES & PROMOTES**

## MESSAGE

---

**(1) SEVERAL BRIEF OBSERVATIONS**

- Potiphar’s wife’s selfish malice
  - There is no way that Potiphar’s wife could have imagined that her lust and her vindictive recourse would be recorded in sacred Scripture.
  - And yet, here is it as a reminder nevertheless... Isn’t this kind of thing repulsive? And isn’t this kind of thing quite common?
    - This sinful person wants to experience a brief moment of sinful pleasure, and she is willing to give up her own dignity and even Joseph’s life in order to get what she wants.

- Joseph's integrity (especially compared with Judah's immorality)
  - For the sake of little ears in the services on Sunday, I have omitted a few passages in Genesis. Chapter 38 is one of them.
  - Joseph's display of sexual purity comes right after Judah exemplifies the opposite. There is much to learn here if we will consider it.
    - Though the Bible records what did happen (adultery, fornication, polygamy, and homosexuality) it is adamant that such sinful expressions are not as God would have it.
    - With incredible splendor and literary genius, the Bible explicitly shows us that God's design for marriage (one man and one woman in covenant for a lifetime) is most beautiful and most beneficial for human flourishing.
  
- The pragmatism of Potiphar, the prison keeper, the cupbearer, and Pharaoh
  - We, the reader, know that God has promised Joseph a seat of supreme authority (through dreams).
  - We know that God is working out His plan to bring Joseph to that place He has promised.
  - **BUT, the characters in the story do not think this way at all!**
    - *Potiphar* wants a good servant, so he buys Joseph.
    - *The prison keeper* notices Joseph's practical skills, and he puts Joseph to work for him.
    - *The cupbearer* wants to earn some credit with the Pharaoh, so he tells Pharaoh that he knows a guy who can help out with his dream problem.
    - *The Pharaoh* wants a man who can execute a good plan (and take the fall if the plan doesn't work out so well), so he puts Joseph in charge of everything.
      - *These are not godly men who are yielding themselves up to God's plan...* These are pragmatic men who are being used by God to accomplish His plans through their pragmatism.

- Joseph's humility
  - In the midst of all of the nastiness that Joseph experiences, he remains a picture of humility.
    - Joseph comes to the cupbearer and the baker, and he does not make himself the superhero. He says, “Do not interpretations belong to God?” (40:8)
    - Even when Joseph has an opportunity to make a name for himself in front of the Pharaoh, he does not have himself in mind. He says, “It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.” (41:16)

## (2) THE TYPOLOGY IS TOO RICH TO NEGLECT (JOSEPH PICTURES CHRIST)

- Once again, we come across the concept of “typology.” We have already considered this at some length, but it is too rich in this part of the story to pass by without pointing out some of it.
- As we have discussed before, we should always look for the way (or ways) that a passage or story is pointing to Jesus.
  - Joseph was “brought down” to Egypt (39:1).
    - As Joseph was “brought down” to Egypt, so Jesus *Christ descended* to earth for the benefit of an unholy people (Jn. 3:13).
  - Joseph was wrongfully thrown into “prison” (39:20) or “the pit” (40:14).
    - As Joseph was wrongfully condemned and thrown into the pit, so *Christ was accursed* (Gal. 3:13) *and condemned* to the pit of death (Mk. 14:64)
  - Joseph maintained purity and integrity.
    - Potiphar’s wife [39:9]; serving the prison keeper [39:23; cf. 40:15]; giving honor to God [41:16]; and serving the Pharaoh [41:56-57]
    - As Joseph maintained purity and integrity in the midst of temptation and dire circumstances, so *Christ endured* incredible *temptation* (Lk. 4:1-12) and remained *virtuous* in the most *horrendous conditions* (Lk. 23:24)

- Joseph was the savior of all who came to him (41:57).
  - As Joseph gave refuge and provision to those who came to him, so ***Christ offers perfect rest*** and ***ultimate salvation*** to those who come to Him (Matt. 11:28-30).
- Joseph provided “bread” or “grain” to all in need (41:57).
  - As Joseph provided “bread,” so ***Christ is the “bread of life”*** for all who come to Him (Jn. 6:44-51).
- So, we should marvel that God has given us a glimpse of the Messiah in the life and experiences of Joseph.
- More importantly, we should marvel that there is a Messiah who has done such things for guilty sinners, and we should be astounded that He has offered Himself to us today.

### (3) DESPITE ALL THE PLAYERS, GOD IS WHO DEMOTES & PROMOTES

- The concept we are going to address here (because it is the focus of Joseph’s story) is providence.
  - As I shall seek to demonstrate, the Bible repetitively declares and argues for God’s sovereign providence.
  - Providence means: “God the good Creator of all things, in His infinite power and wisdom does uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, to the end for the which they were created, according unto His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will; to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy.”<sup>1</sup>
- **First**, God does not merely turn ***lemons into lemonade***... He is just as “in charge” during bad times as He is during good times.
  - When his brothers were terrified because they discovered Joseph was in charge of everything, Joseph said to them, “**And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God**

---

<sup>1</sup> This quote is from chapter 5 of the London Baptist Confession of Faith, as recorded in the Reformation Study Bible. Sproul, R. C. (Ed.). (2015). The Reformation Study Bible: English Standard Version (2015 Edition) (p. 2481). Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust.

**sent me** before you to preserve life... **God sent me** before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So **it was not you who sent me here, but God**. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt” (Genesis 45:5–8).

- And more succinctly, Joseph said, “**you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good...**” (Genesis 50:20).
- Joseph is not removing culpability from his brothers, but he is pointing to God’s providence in all of this
- **Some Bible passages that speak directly to the issue:**
  - God brings about both “good” and “bad”
    - “Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come?” (Lamentations 3:37–38).
      - Three possible definitions of the word translated “bad”<sup>2</sup>
        - **evil, harm** (to s.one) Gn 26:29; *hārā’â* evil (plan) 1 S 23:9; *rā’âtî* harm to me Ps 35:4; *’anšê rā’â* evil men Pr 24:1; *l’rā’â* w. evil intent 2 S 18:32;
        - **wickedness, perverseness** Gn 6:5; **crime** Ju 9:56;
        - **misery, trouble, disaster** Gn 19:19; *yôm rā’â* fatal day Pr 27:5; God brings *rā’â* 1 K 14:10; **evil** (in a weakened sense) Ec 5:12
  - Even the roll of the dice is a “decision” God makes.
    - “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD” (Proverbs 16:33).

---

<sup>2</sup> Holladay, W. L., & Köhler, L. (2000). *A concise Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament* (pp. 342–343). Leiden: Brill.

- Rulers of the earth are moved about by the hand of God.
    - “The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will” (Proverbs 21:1).
  - God Himself “makes well-being and creates calamity”
    - “I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the LORD, who does all these things” (Isaiah 45:5–7).
  - God makes the rain fall (Acts 14:17), the sun to shine (Matt. 5:45), the sparrows to fly (Matt. 10:29), and He even ensures that lions have their food (Ps. 104:21).
    - Of this you can be sure: If you ever doubted that God is providentially sovereign (controlling all that happens according to His divine wisdom), then such a thought has not come from God. He consistently reveals Himself as absolutely supreme and perfectly sovereign.
- **Second, God always acts with intention and purpose**, but we do not always get to know the details.
  - We should read the story of Joseph with an eye towards God’s ultimate plan.
  - God is demoting and promoting for His purposes.
    - After Joseph’s dreams, we are right to read of his sale into slavery and wonder, “What is God doing here?” “How does this help Joseph become ruler over his brothers?”
    - Then we read about Joseph’s arrival in Potiphar’s house, and we may rightly think, “Ah... this is the beginning of his ascent.”
    - When Potiphar’s wife tries to seduce Joseph and then accuses him of immorality, we may say again, “What in the world?” “How does this help Joseph rise to power and authority?”

- Then we read about the baker and the cupbearer, and we may hesitantly ask, “Will Joseph at least be freed from prison by this fortunate encounter?”
  - But no! The cupbearer forgets Joseph... and it is a good thing he did. If Joseph would have been released then, he would not have been in Egypt to interpret Pharaoh’s dreams later.
  - At each step – Joseph a beloved son, Joseph a betrayed brother, Joseph a slave, Joseph a prisoner, Joseph a forgotten friend, Joseph a humble interpreter, Joseph a resource manager, Joseph a ruler of Egypt, Joseph a savior of his people, and Joseph a gracious provider – this story is meant to scream about God’s effective plans.
- While we are able to see God’s purpose in Joseph’s calamity, this is often not the case.
- Job lost everything, and he is never given any explanation from God as to why...

- When God finally speaks to Job, He says, “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?”

Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me.

Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?  
Tell me, if you have understanding.

Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb, when I made clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band, and prescribed limits for it and set bars and doors, and said, “Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed”?

Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place, that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it?” (Job 38:2–13).

- The point is that we are to trust God's good purposes – even if we cannot see any good in our circumstances.
- In His divine wisdom, God is bringing all things along just as He sees fit.
- **Third**, we must think in terms of *redemptive history* (and not American history, our even our personal history).
  - You may not ever get to see or understand why God is bringing you through your times of affliction, but you may rest assured that God has never not been in control of the smallest detail.
  - America is a country worth fighting for, and we enjoy benefits that many others do not. However, we should not imagine that God is dependent upon American success.
    - Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome were all impressive states – Greece and Rome far exceeding the longevity of America to date. And yet, each of these fell to various foes (both foreign and domestic).
    - My point today is not to slam America... I am glad to be an American.
    - My point is to challenge those of you who think that America can somehow save the Church of Jesus Christ.
    - I want to challenge those of you who are looking to a presidential candidate or a judicial appointment or a partisan House or Senate for your hope and peace.
    - I want to help prepare you to face election day with eager participation, and yet otherworldly confidence.
  - We, Christians, are interested most in what God is doing to bring about His kingdom on earth – forevermore.
    - We may rest with great confidence that Christ is King!
    - God is the providential sovereign over all things.
    - We who trust and love Christ are under His providential care.
    - And We shall ultimately be brought to Him in glorious display... Not because of anything we have done, and not because of any worldly power or influence.

## SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

---

*The Providence of God* by John Piper

<http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-providence-of-god>

*The Hairs of Your Head Numbered* by C.H. Spurgeon

<http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols34-36/chs2005.pdf>

*The Sale of Joseph and the Son of God* by John Piper

<http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-sale-of-joseph-and-the-son-of-god>