

Genesis 42:1-38

(Matt 25)

"A Dream Come True"

From forgotten in prison to placed in world power. That's the transition that takes place in Joseph's life in Ch 41. *Providentially* it took place according to the sovereignty of God's plan. *Practically* speaking it was able to happen because Joseph never ceased *servicing* God & used his gifts to *glorify* God no matter where he was or what was happening in his life.

It didn't matter how much he'd been hurt, how bad others had burned him, he *loved* God therefore he would *serve* God by serving others. He didn't bury his talent due to fear, or disillusionment, or disappointment. Regardless of what was going on in his life, he *belonged* to God, therefore he availed himself to be *used* by God.

Listen; when it comes to you *servicing* God, being used *by* God, God has given you a free will. & What that means is that you can choose to serve Him, or choose not to serve Him. The bible declares that the spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet (1 Cor 14:29). Meaning you can operate in the gifts/abilities/talents God has given you, or you can choose not to. You'll still be *saved* (salvation is a free gift), but you'll miss out on much of the blessing that God has for your life.

& You can legitimize & rationalize in your mind why you're justified in not engaging, not serving; but God would have you to invest that which He has entrusted to you for the increase of His kingdom. You're in Matt 25, allow me to turn your attention to Vs 14 (-29).

You see God wants to use your life. & In the end He wants to bless your life. But if you're unavailable (for whatever reason) it doesn't matter, your moment will pass you by & rather than be blessed you'll actually regress.

Joseph had no idea that by interpreting the butlers dream (while in prison) it would lead to his ascension into world power. How do you go from life in prison to being the 2nd most powerful man on the face of the earth in the course of an afternoon? There's no way he could've seen that coming, he was hoping (at best) for a "get out of jail free" card. But God was about to do exceedingly abundantly above all he could ask or think. Listen, you never know when God is going to have that "butler" (right place, right time, right person) enter the equation of your life. However if you've buried your talent, refused to engage due to disappointment, fear of being burned (or whatever), others will miss out & you'll still be sitting there, imprisoned in your bitterness/hurt when God wanted to set you free & do a great work in your life. Invest the gifts that God has given you, serve the body of Christ, be a blessing to others & God will lift you up.

A couple yrs after the butler's dream, Pharaoh had a couple dreams; no one he called upon could understand or interpret them for him. The Lord jars the butler's memory & he informs Pharaoh of a young Hebrew slave that interpreted his dream when he was in prison & it all went down exactly according to the interpretation.

Pharaoh sends for Joseph, asks him if he can help him out & he says, "No, but the God whom I serve can." He took the time to deflect the attention from himself & give glory to God. Pharaoh tells him his dreams & Joseph says, "The 2 dreams are 1... 7 yrs of unparalleled fruitfulness followed by 7 yrs of unparalleled famine in all the land. God has shown you what He's about to do. Therefore find a wise & discerning man, build storehouses everywhere/every city & charge a 20% flat tax throughout all of Egypt. Store up during the yrs of plenty & distribute during the yrs of famine." Pharaoh says, "In as much as God has shown *you* this, there's none as wise & discerning as you so you're the guy." He took his signet ring & put it on Joseph's hand, put a gold chain around his neck, gave him royal robes, a royal chariot, & said that he would be greater than Joseph only in regard to the throne. He sends him throughout the land & everyone is made to bow before him & w/out his word no one lifts a hand or foot in all of Egypt.

7 yrs go by. Pharaoh gives him a wife, he has a couple of sons (Manasseh & Ephraim), they store up so much grain that they quit keeping record of it all; it was immeasurable. Then the famine hits. The people cry out to Pharaoh. He says, "Go to Joseph, whatever he tells you, do it." So Joseph opened the storehouses & began selling the grain & people began to come to him from all over the known world because the famine was everywhere, including... the land of Canaan; notice.

Vs 1-4

Jacob didn't want to send Benjamin because he was the only son of the wife of his love (Rachael). Rachael had died, Joseph used to be dad's favorite but now that he's gone Jacob has *really* put a safeguard around Joseph's little brother, Benjamin.

But word comes down that there's grain to be bought in Egypt & Jacob notices that when Egypt is mentioned his 10 other sons were just kinda standing around looking at each other w/these weird looks on their faces. The phrase literally means, "to look questioningly one at the other."

Now Jacob doesn't know it, but we do. I'll tell why they're just standing around awkwardly at the mention of Egypt. Because their guilty consciences are goading them.

They're thinking, "What if we see Joseph down there being treated harshly?" Or knowing the culture they may be concerned about being arrested & enslaved themselves! But we'll discover that though it's been over 20yrs since they sold him off as a slave, the memory of what they've done is still haunting them. You guys, how we handle guilt has a radical effect upon how we behave.

We'll discuss in a few minutes how we *need* to handle it, (how to be set free from it) but unfortunately how many people *choose* to handle it is by stuffing it down deep inside of themselves & it just festers in them like an open wound. You may not see it on their face, but it's killing them inside. There's an old song by Queen called, "The show must go on". It's all about the façade of life, how he was unsure what the point of life even was, but the show must go on. The chorus says, "Inside my heart is breaking, my make-up may be flaking but my smile still stays on." You guys that's the anthem of all of humanity apart from Christ. Guilt is tearing them apart but they pretend life is great...

But here's the deal; there's an answer. It doesn't have to be that way. This world is dying of a spiritual famine. Lives are headed for hell, they need the bread of life, but people just stand around looking at one another like they don't know what to do about it. Jacob says, "Boys, I know where there's grain." & He sends them (as we'll see) to Joseph. We need to point people to the greater than Joseph, the Bread of Life, J.C. They don't have direction, they're confused, you have the answer, send them to Jesus.

Let me say this as well. We recognize that famine (in & of itself) isn't a good thing, but God used it. God can (& will) use material need/lack in our lives to get us to do things that we may normally never do. Normally these guys would never head to Egypt; but their need drove them there. Even so God will at times use need in our lives to lead us in the direction we need to be heading...

Vs 5-6

This is what we call, "a dream come true" for Joseph, literally ☺. Of course they don't know it's Joseph, they're not looking for him, they definitely don't suspect him being the prime minister of Egypt. He's shaved, wearing Egyptian garb, speaking the language of Egypt (not to mention he was 17 when they saw him last, now he's about 38). But he recognized them right off the bat. All they know is that their lives literally depend on this guy so they're doing their utmost to pay him great respect & they're bowing before him.

It's interesting that when plotted to murder him, then sold him into slavery they did so w/the specific agenda of defeating his dreams of them bowing to him... (Gen 37:18-20)

However in sending Joseph to Egypt, they provided the means by which the dreams would be fulfilled... This is the wisdom & glory of God's providence. He can use even the evil intentions of man to advance His *good plan*. Of course that doesn't justify man's evil intent, it magnifies God's wisdom. Asaph wrote in the 76th Psalm, "*Surely the wrath of man shall praise You;*" Ps 76:10. God can take what man means for evil & turn it in such a way as to bring to pass an ending that is good.

Vs 7-17

Now there's a debate as to whether or not Joseph was messing w/his brothers (kinda putting the screws to them) or if he was seeking to see if there was any change in them. Perhaps it was a bit of both, ultimately God would use it facilitate their repentance & orchestrate reconciliation between them.

But make no mistake, this tough time that they're being put through is a "test" in their lives. Joseph tells them plainly, "In this manner you shall be *tested*". They had claimed to be honest men, that's about to be made known... You guys understand that will allow tough times to test us; to prove out what's *in* us. It's not that *He* doesn't know, it's that often times *we* don't know. *We thought we were spiritual, but by the way we handle the trial (anger, frustration, bitterness etc) we come to realize that we're in fact carnal. We thought we were spiritually mature, what we find out is that we're way more spiritually immature than we thought we were & these are areas in which we need to grow. Trials don't make us a certain way, what they do is draw out of us the way we already are...* If there were no bitterness in our heart, it wouldn't be drawn out. When we see someone get a promotion, or a new house (whatever) do we rejoice w/them or are we covetous or jealous of them? You see, tests can reveal the reality of what's in our heart that needs to be surrendered, crucified & cut away.

Listen, sometimes God uses ways that we think are harsh to get us to the place we need to be (inwardly/spiritually). & It's necessary due to the hardness of our own hearts. If we could be led there gently that's what God would prefer, but unfortunately we don't always respond to the gentle nudge of the Holy Spirit. Therefore God has to ramp it up to get our attention. The psalmist said it like this, "*Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word.*"¹

Check out Vs 9, "Then Joseph remembered the dreams which he had dreamed about them,"

¹ The New King James Version. (1982). [Ps 119:67]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

As I read over this I was quickened again to the fact (& found it interesting) that God knew this was going to happen & revealed it to Joseph over 20yrs earlier. What I was renewed in was the fact that this is one of the ways in which God proves to us the reality of who He is; through declaring to us the future before it ever takes place. Leave Genesis again & turn quickly to **Isaiah 44** (6-8).

God says that the way you can know that He's God is by the fact that He declares the future w/pin point accuracy before it ever happens, as though it's already history. You're in Isaiah, look at Ch 46 (9-10).

Paul tells us in the 4th Ch of the book of Romans (Vs 17) that God calls those things which do not exist as though they did... Peter spoke of it as the more sure word of prophecy (KJV). There is no other "God", no other book on the planet that dares to stake its veracity, it's legitimacy & it's integrity solely on it's ability to articulate w/clarity & 100% accuracy events of history, yrs; sometimes decades or even centuries in advance. On top of that if it ever misses even one time you can justifiably discredit the entire thing... Now I haven't counted personally but of the resources I checked there are over 1,800 prophecies in the bible. Over 300 concerning Christ alone. Guess how many have missed so far?... Zero, none, not one. **Now if God's word (over the last several thousand yrs) has never missed or failed in even a single prophetic utterance; I think we can safely say that we can trust that it wont miss from this point forward either. God is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent, you can take His word to the bank.**

That's great news, because he's told me that if I believe on the Lord J.C. I'll be saved (I can trust Him for that). He's told me that Christ will come again & receive me to Himself that where He is there I will be also, I believe Him for that. He's told me that the day is coming when there will be no more pain, nor sorrow, nor death, no more tears for the former things will have passed away. He'll make all things new; family they're words that are true & faithful.

God had revealed to Joseph that his brothers would bow before him & here it comes to pass just as God had shown him it would.

Vs 18-20

Hey, because of them he'd spent yrs in prison, I suppose a few days for them was only appropriate ☺. They'd been humbled & they were ready to do whatever they needed to do. Now when Joseph said, "I fear God" that should've resonated in them a little bit.

#1 It would mean that he would seek to do right by them. But #2 the word he used was “Elohim”, the Hebrew word for God. He’s not saying, “I fear RA” (the sun god of the Egyptians) or, “I fear Osiris” or “Anubis”. He was saying, “I fear the True & Living God, the same God you serve, I fear & I serve as well”. It should’ve caught their attention.

But note again that Joseph never misses an opportunity to give a testimony for God. He could’ve just set his demands & sent them away. Instead he lets them know that the decisions he’s making are through the convictions & leading of God in his life.

Vs 21-24

Now as for why he chose Simeon we don’t know. My suspicion is that it’s because he was the instigator in the plot to kill him. We know that he was a cruel man & it’ll come up again before Jacob dies. It could also be as simple as he volunteered to stay behind, we don’t know.

But here’s what I want to hone in on. It’s been more than 20 yrs since they sold Joseph off as a slave yet they immediately associate what’s happening to them now as retribution for the sin in their lives. Truth be told there really wasn’t a completely logical reason for them to connect those 2 things. However a guilty conscience has a tendency to see every trouble as a penalty for sin & guilt in our lives. It’s just the way guilt works, it leaves an impression on our heart & our mind that just lingers there goading us & working us into misery.

This is a real problem for humanity; people don’t know how to deal w/the guilt in their lives. There’s a reason that people *feel* guilty, it’s because *we are* guilty! We’ve sinned against God & violated His holiness, His righteousness. The question is, what do we do w/that guilt, how do we handle that guilt? People will do strange things to try & atone for the guilt they’re feeling. The Federal government actually has what they call a “Federal Conscience Fund” which collects thousands of dollars every year that people send in because they’ve cheated the government in some way. Maybe they took an army blanket as a souvenir or they cheated on their taxes. They can’t sleep at night so they try to pay it back anonymously.

However the problem w/that (as it pertains to who we are spiritually) is that we can’t pay God back... We can never atone for our guilt; so what are we to do? The bible is very clear that if we’re to find release from the *guilt* of our sin we have to learn to humble ourselves & *confess* our sins to God.

To agree w/Him *about* our sin & in so doing turn *from* our sin. David spoke of the relentless erosion of his soul due to un-confessed sin. He said, *"When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah* (Now notice how this dilemma was resolved) *I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' And You forgave the iniquity of my sin."*²

John said that like this, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*³ If we confess our sins to God, in humble repentance before God, we find forgiveness & a release from the guilt & shame of our sin.

Now they didn't know Joseph could understand them, he'd been using an interpreter. So he's hearing their honest confession. Vs 21, "We are truly *guilty* concerning our brother" it's the 1st step toward reconciliation, he's seeing & sensing a genuine change in their hearts, a repentance of their sin. He's also finding out that Reuben tried to talk some sense into them but they wouldn't have it.

& As we might imagine hearing all this overwhelmed Joseph w/emotion & so he turned away from them & he wept, when he regained his composure he took Simeon from them, bound him & sent them on their way.

Vs 25-28

Do you see what a guilty conscience does to you? They're convinced God is punishing them because of their sin. In reality Joseph was blessing them. However they're worried that already being suspected as spies, now they may be condemned as thieves.

Vs 29-36

When Jacob says, "You have bereaved me" we get the impression that he was suspicious of the boys involvement in the disappearance of Joseph. Compound that w/his refusal to send Benjamin w/them & it seems he just didn't trust them w/Rachael's sons.

Yet here's the irony in it all. As far as Jacob is concerned, "All these things are against me!" In reality he'll discover that they were very much working *for him*. He'll be saved from the famine, reunited w/Joseph, given a new home in Egypt & taken care of for the rest of his life. The bible declares that we see now through a glass darkly, we can't see everything clearly. That's why we trust in the Lord whole heartedly.

² The New King James Version. (1982). (Ps 32:3-5). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ The New King James Version. (1982). (1 Jn 1:9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Too often we take the position, “All these things are against me” when the voice of faith would say, “How is God working this out *for me*.” Jacob is about to experience in the practical what Paul taught in principle when he said, “*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*”⁴

Think about all the grief, all the griping, all the grumbling that God has to endure because we can't just trust Him. We're complaining about everything when if we'd just wait *on* Him & trust *in* Him we'll see that He's orchestrating the course of life for our eternal good & His eternal glory. How much better if we could resolve, God I may not be able to see it, but I'm trusting you in the midst *of* it, have Your way.

Vs 37-38

Evidently Reuben just wasn't the sharpest tool in the shed 😊. How on earth could it console a grandfather to kill his 2 grandsons if something happens to his own son? Jacob in essence says, “Reuben, don't be stupid. Forget about it, Ben is staying w/me.” Hey, it might cost Simeon life in prison, but I guess that was worth it to Jacob...

Here's the point; God has a plan & He *will* bring it to pass. We can trust Him *for* it, or resist Him *in* it, either way His will, *will be done*. His word *will be accomplished*. Trust in the Lord w/all your heart, lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him & He will direct your path. Amen? Amen.

Prayer Points:

God we thank You for assuring us once again of Your goodness, or Your willingness to do what it takes to get us where we need to be. Because You love us too much to give up *on* us or let go *of* us. Help us to trust in You, to find peace in not knowing why, or how because we know Who. Have Your way in our lives & in this place.

Listen, if you're struggling w/guilt in your life, you're not alone. All sin & fall short of the glory of God. There's release that awaits you, forgiveness that will find you. Confess your sin, turn from your sin & give your heart to J.C. who has loved you, shed His blood for you & defeated death so that you might have everlasting life. Believe on the Lord J.C. & be saved.

⁴ The New King James Version. (1982). [Ro 8:28]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.