

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

UNDER THE EXALTED CHRIST, THE GOSPEL BEGINS TO SPREAD

THE ACTS

† THE BOOK OF ACTS

OF THE APOSTLES

An overview of the Book of Acts, by Given O. Blakely

ACTS 5:31-32

"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Lesson #29

COMMENTARY ON: 7:9-16

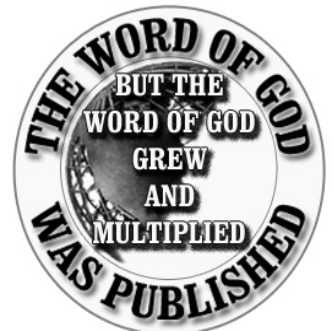
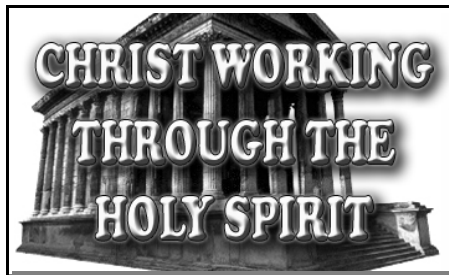
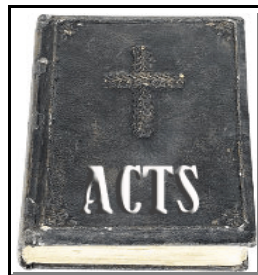
STEPHEN'S DEFENSE #2

Our text begins with the sons of Jacob being moved with envy against their younger brother Joseph, and selling him into Egypt. Genesis 37:28 pinpoints the time when Joseph was sold into Egypt. 37:29-41:44 covers the time from Joseph's beginning in Egypt until his exaltation – thirteen years later. 41:45 through the conclusion of Genesis covers the time from Joseph's exaltation through his death. Within that section, 42:1-47:27 covers the events involved in Jacob and his clan coming into Egypt. The next seventeen years, until the time of Jacob's death, are covered in 47:28-48:22. The record of Jacob blessing his sons is found in 49:1-33. The burial of Jacob, and the events attending it, is covered from 50:1-50:15. The rest of the book of Genesis (50:16-26) covers the remainder of Joseph's life and the interment of his body. That means that we have hardly any information at all concerning the experience of the Israelites during the vast majority of the 430 years they sojourned in Egypt – and precious little concerning their oppression for four hundred years.

ACTS 17:26-27

"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."

" . . . and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

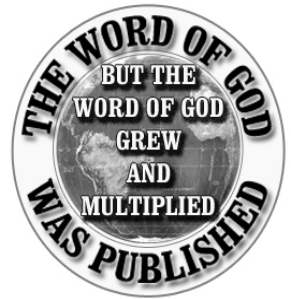


Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



The Book of Acts

Lesson Number 29



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ALT = Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED = Amplified Bible (1965), ASV = American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA = Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV = English Revised Version (1885), ESV = English Stand Version (2001), GNB = Good News (1966), GWN = God'S Word (1995), IE = International English, ISV = International Standard Version (1967), JPS = Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV = King James Version (1611), L.ITV = Literal Translation of the Bible ((1976), LIVING = Living Bible (1971), MKJV = Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY = Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD = Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB = New American Bible (2002), NASB = New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU = New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB = New International Bible, NIV = New International Version (1984), NJB = New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV = New King James Version (1979), NLT =New Living Translation (1996), NRSV = New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS = J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT = BISHOP'S New Testament (1595), RSV = Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK = JPS Tanakj (1985), Webster = The Webster Bible (1833),WEYMOUTH = Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS = William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE = Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE = Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT =Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- Lexicon and Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, LEH = LEH Lexicon, GINGRICH = Gingrich Lexicon

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF HOW THE ENTHRONED CHRIST, BY MEANS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WORKED THROUGH HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND GODLY MEN, TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD, AND TO BRING EDIFICATION AND STABILITY TO MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY.

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

STEPHEN'S DEFENSE, #2

“ 7:9 And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, 10 And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. 11 Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance. 12 But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. 13 And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh. 14 Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls. 15 So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers, 16 And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem.” (Acts 7:9-16)

INTRODUCTION

Our text begins with the sons of Jacob being moved with envy against their younger brother Joseph, and selling him into Egypt. Genesis 37:28 pinpoints the time when Joseph was sold into Egypt: “Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into

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Stephen continues his defense by tracing the development of the nation through the exaltation of Joseph—by Given O. Blakely

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experience of the Israelites during the vast majority of the 430 years they sojourned in Egypt – and precious little concerning their oppression for four hundred years.

If men were writing the book, the burden of emphasis would have been placed upon the time of Israel's oppression. Instead of doing this, the Spirit moves Moses to emphasize their providential beginning, and the purpose for which they went down into Egypt. The reason for this unique emphasis is that the Scriptures were not written merely to provide us with historical accounts. Rather, the working of God himself is embedded in the record. **In this we are being exposed to HOW all things are worked together for the good of those who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose.**

Think, for example, of the circumstances that seemed to forbid the

rising of a nation from whom the Messiah would be manifested.

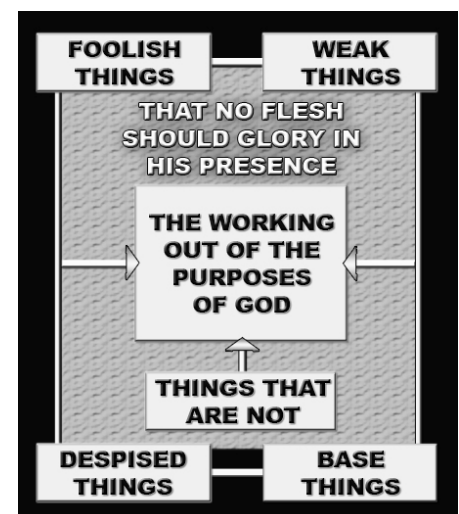
- ⇨ The family from which Abraham was chosen was idolaters.
- ⇨ The call of God came to a man who was thoroughly unacquainted with the Lord.
- ⇨ Abraham's participation in the purpose of God involved separating from his kindred and homeland.
- ⇨ Abraham had no idea where he was going – only that God would show him the land to which he was being called.
- ⇨ From the beginning of their marriage, Abraham's wife was barren.
- ⇨ After twenty-four years, Abraham still had no offspring.
- ⇨ When it was confirmed to Abraham that the promised offspring would come from Sarah, he was ninety-nine, and she was ninety – still barren.
- ⇨ At the time scheduled for the birth, it was biologically impossible for Abraham and Sarah to have a son.
- ⇨ When Abraham arrived in the promised land, it was being ravaged by a famine.
- ⇨ When Isaac married Rebekah, she was barren.
- ⇨ When Isaac came to the promised land, there was a famine in the land.
- ⇨ When Jacob married Rachel, she was barren.
- ⇨ Jacob's favored son, Joseph, through whom the fledgling nation would be sustained, was hated by his brothers, and sold into Egypt as a slave.
- ⇨ When Jacob was in the promised land, there was a famine, and he had to go down into Egypt.
- ⇨ All three of the fathers of the Jewish nation – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

– were not given any of the promised land, but sojourned in it as strangers and pilgrims.

- ⇨ Jacob and all of his sons – the fathers of the twelve tribes – died in Egypt, never inheriting the promised land.
- ⇨ The only piece of real estate that was owned by any Israelite up to the time of its occupation by Joshua, was purchased by Abraham – even though God said He would give him and his seed the land as an inheritance.

These are the circumstances Stephen is declaring in his defense. They provide a sort of context in which the Lord is working out his purpose – a context filled with impossible circumstances. One can only imagine how modern-day counselors would have spoken to the fathers concerning their experiences.

What we have here is a historical dialog that confirms the manner in which God works. That manner is declared by Paul, and must be seen by all who possess faith. *"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence"* (1 Cor 1:27-29).



In every bonafide work of God, the door is shut to any human boasting. As Paul would say, *"It is excluded"* (Rom 3:27) – i.e. there is no place made for it. There is nothing about the work of God – absolutely nothing – that allows for the exaltation of flesh, or for boasting in its

accomplishments. It is not that a legitimate work of God can take place, and yet men can boast in it. This is an impossibility, for **God works in such a manner as excludes the very possibility of boasting.** It is not that such glorying ought not to be done – it **cannot** be done!

What God is doing does not make any provision for it. If, therefore, there is a purported Christian work that allows for the flesh to boast, it cannot be from God. Such works have their genesis in the mind of man, not *"the mind of the Lord"* (1 Cor 2:16).

THE PATRIARCH'S MOVED WITH ENVY

“7:9a *And the patriarchs, moved with envy . . .*”

Stephen now accounts for Joseph getting down into Egypt. Men were involved in the matter, but their will was not what drove the incidents that

LIVING *"these fathers,"* IE *"the patriarchs [Jacob's sons],"* AMPLIFIED and *"these men were our ancestors."* CEV

I have observed that there is a marked tendency in modern translators to ignore the reality of a Divine

“The lot,” as Solomon put it, was “cast into” their “lap,” creating a circumstance where they appeared to be able to do whatever they wanted. However, the outworking of the whole affair was strictly in the hands of the Lord. As Solomon elaborated on the lot being cast into the lap, he added, “but the

followed. *"The lot,"* as Solomon put it, was *"cast into"* their *"lap,"* creating a circumstance where they appeared to be able to do whatever they wanted. **However, the outworking of the whole affair was strictly in the hands of the Lord.** As Solomon elaborated on the lot being cast into the lap, he added, *"but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD"* (Prov 16:33). That is the unwavering manner of the Kingdom. It is also one of the reasons why we are not to *"judge according to the appearance"* (John 7:24). **Appearance lends itself to an overestimation of the power and influence of men.** Those who are unduly drawn to appearance will always end up being deceived concerning the real situation.

THE PATRIARCHS

"And the patriarchs . . ." Other versions read, *"the brothers,"* BBE *"Jacob's sons,"* GWN *"our fathers,"* MRD *"these men,"*

vocabulary. In their supposed eagerness to make the text plain, they often remove key words that aid us in comprehending the working of the Lord. The word *"patriarch"* is a case in point. It is a good word, and ought to be added to the vocabulary of the people of God. In the text before us, some versions use other words in the place of *"patriarch."* Among them are *"brothers,"* BBE *"men,"* LIVING *"sons,"* AMPLIFIED and *"ancestors."* CEV

The word *"patriarch"* comes from the Greek word *πατριάρχαι* (pat-ri-arch-ai). It is a transliteration of the word, translating the letters instead of the word. This is because there is no English word that precisely parallels the original word – which is the whole reason for transliteration. The word means, *"founder of a tribe, progenitor,"* THAYER *"Chief father . . . father of a tribe or nation, progenitor, chief of a family,"* FRIBERG and *"the father, or chief of a race,"* LIDDELL-SCOTT That meaning, as you can see, is a

far cry from the translations I have cited.

There are fourteen men to whom the term *"patriarch"* is applied: Abraham, the twelve sons of Jacob, and David.

⇒ **ABRAHAM.** *"Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils"* (Heb 7:4). Abraham is viewed as *"father,"* or progenitor, in three senses. He is the one from whom the Jews themselves came. He is also the father of many nations, including Israel, but not limited to them (Gen 17:4). He is also the father of all who believe in Christ (Rom 4:11).

⇒ **JACOB'S TWELVE SONS.** *"And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs"* (Acts 7:8). Jacobs twelve sons are the progenitors of the twelve tribes of Israel.

⇒ **DAVID.** *"Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day"* (Acts 2:29). David is of the tribe of Judah, and is the progenitor of Christ as the King. It is David's throne upon which Jesus presently sits (Acts 2:30-36).

Each of these individuals are also referred to as fathers.

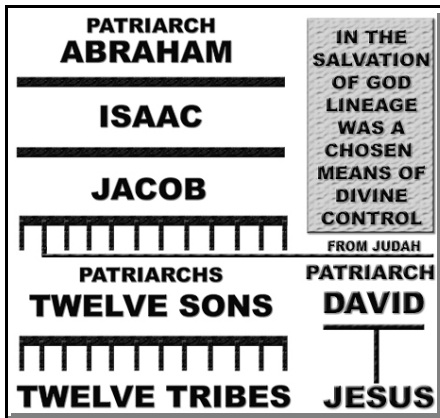
⇒ **ABRAHAM.** *"Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee"*

(Gen 17:5). "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is **the father of us all**" (Rom 4:16).

⇒ **JACOB'S TWELVE SONS.** "But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out **our fathers first**" (Acts 7:12). "So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and **our fathers**" (Acts 7:15).

⇒ **DAVID.** "Blessed be the kingdom of **our father David**, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest" (Mark 11:10).

In our society, lineage is not considered to be of any major importance. This is because our nation is actually a conglomeration of peoples from various heritages. However, this was not the case with Israel. First, the chief purpose of the nation was to bring forth the Messiah. For this reason, the lineage had to be kept pure. Mingling with other nations and/or learning their ways was strictly forbidden (Ex 34:12-16; Deut 7:1-6), and whenever Israel violated this command, they always got into trouble (1 Kgs 11:4; Ezra 10:2-3,10-19; Neh 13:23-27).



The term "patriarchs," therefore, is important to the understanding of the Jewish race. This is particularly true in the account that Stephen is giving, for in it all manner of difficulties existed for this small and fledgling group. **Even though eleven of the twelve patriarchs were themselves very flawed, yet because of the God of heaven, the race was**

protected, and the Messiah was born of pure lineage at the appointed time – "made of a woman, made under the Law" (Gal 4:4). This is one of the points that is accentuated in the two genealogies of Jesus (Matt 1:1-16; Lk 3:23-38). Jesus, for example, had to be from the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10; Micah 5:2; Heb 7:14; Rev 5:5). He also had to be from the lineage of David, who was himself from the tribe of Judah (Matt 1:1). That means that Mary also had to be from the tribe of Judah and the house of David (Lk 1:27). While Joseph was not the father of Jesus, because he was charged the responsibility of raising Him, and because Mary married him, he also had to be from the lineage of Judah and the house of David (Matt 1:20).

Ponder also, that the priesthood, both the Aaronic and Levitical, had to be from the lineage of Levi (Num 3:6; 8:19; 17:8; 18:2; Josh 21:10).

In a fleshly covenant, pedigree was all-important. During Nehemiah's day, the people had departed from this, and the priesthood had become defiled. Nehemiah re-established the priesthood after the proper lineage (Neh 7:64).

The Reason for the Rule

All of this prepared the way for the New Covenant. In Jesus, a new genealogy is reckoned, for the fleshly line ended with Him. That is why Isaiah cried, "who shall declare His generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living" (Isa 53:8). Now, although He had no fleshly offspring, His name is still "the Everlasting Father" (Isa 9:6). He has been given "children" (Heb 2:13), and they are numerous beyond number. In Him the promise is fulfilled, "for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD" (Isa 54:1).

The genealogy of Jesus is even more precise than that of the Israelites. There must be a paternal connection with Jesus before any individual will be accepted by God. His Seed must be in the person (1 John 3:9), and he must be a partaker of His nature (2 Pet 1:4). The absence of these things absolutely negates any profession of identity with the Lord. Under the Old Covenant, institutional connection was basic. Under

the New Covenant, it carries no weight at all. This is absolutely decimating to the sectarian approach to truth, and the vaunting of denominations. Lifeless religion was common under the Old Covenant. It is unlawful under the New.

MOVED WITH ENVY

Other versions read, "becoming envious," NKJV "became jealous," NASB "having indignation," TNT and "boiling with envy and hatred and anger." AMPLIFIED

Scriptural Reports of Men

The Scriptures do not varnish or gloss the human condition. God respects no man's person – that is He never interacts with men in disassociation from what they really are. This is not commonly perceived. Some see God's grace as having a loving and beneficial association with men regardless of what they really are. This is not a God-glorifying view, and approaches the subject of Divine favor as though Jesus did not even exist, and the new birth was not a reality. **The truth of the matter is that in Christ men are changed, or transformed, in order that they might have fellowship with the Father, and remain in his favor.**

The Account of the Patriarchs

With these things in mind, we return to Stephen's account of Joseph's brothers rising up against him without cause. They thought nothing of the fact that Joseph was their own brother, in the lineage of Abraham, and among the chosen people. They dishonored their father Jacob, by viewing his preference of Joseph as uncomely, and even wrong. They would have preferred that Jacob honor **them** above Joseph. Therefore, envy entered their hearts. Here, the word "envy" connotes "to be heated or to boil with envy, hatred, and anger." THAYER "hostile emotion based on resentment." FRIBERG

Envy eats at the vitals of soul, and is described as causing rotteness to the bones: "envy the rotteness of the bones" (Prov 14:30). That is, it causes the basic human constitution to break down. It breaks down all barriers to doing evil, so that Solomon declared, "who is able to stand before envy?" (Prov 27:4). This is also the sin that drove the Jews and their leaders to deliver Jesus to Pilate for the

sentencing of death (Matt 27:18). When God gave the Gentiles “over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not convenient,” envy was one of the transgressions that broke out (Rom 1:29).

Thus, this uncomely trait broke out among the eleven brothers of Joseph. Envy will prove to be the kind of trait that compels them to do something. **It will powerfully constrain them to go to whatever lengths they think is necessary to rid themselves of the influence of Joseph.** We will find that envy has no moral boundaries. It is limitless in its capacity to remove what is conceived to be a threat.

Years later, among their progeny, the trait of envy would erupt against Moses. The insurrection was led by Korah, and is described in Psalm 106:16: “They **envied** Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the LORD. The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan,

and covered the company of Abiram. And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked” (Psa 106:16-18). Thus we see what folly envy provokes in men. We also see how the God of heaven reacts to envy.

The Absence of Such A Trait Among New Covenant Leaders

It ought to be noted that, following the ascension of Jesus into heaven, this trait was never found among the twelve apostles. None of them envied Peter for being given the keys to the Kingdom of heaven (Matt 16:19). They did not envy Peter, James, and John, for being the inner circle (Matt 17:1), or John for being the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 21:20). **Following Christ’s enthronement there was never any manifestation of envy among “the apostles”** (Rev 21:14), who are the New Covenant parallel of the “*twelve patriarchs*” (Acts 7:8). Even before His enthronement, envy was not found

among them.

The absence of this sort of reaction among the twelve apostles confirms the superiority of the New Covenant, in which the nature of the constituents of the covenant is changed by means of transformation. It is not that they had mastered inappropriate human emotions through discipline. Rather, they had become partakers of the Divine nature, and were in the process of being conformed to the image of God’s dear Son. Because the New Covenant is “*a better covenant established upon better promises*” (Heb 8:6), **it produces better qualities within its constituents.** This, coupled with their deliverance from the power of darkness, accounts for the superior character of those who are truly in Christ Jesus. Rather than “*the works of the flesh*” being prominent within them, through their faith it is “*the fruit of the Spirit*” that now characterizes their lives (Gal 5:19-25).

THEY SOLD JOSEPH INTO EGYPT

“^{9b} . . . sold Joseph into Egypt . . .” Other versions read, “sold him as a slave into Egypt,”^{NIV} “gave him to the Egyptians for money,”^{BBE} “sold him away into Egypt,”^{DARBY} “sold him into slavery, and he was taken into Egypt,”^{GWN} and “sold him to be a slave in Egypt.”^{NLT}

This is one of the sad accounts of pre-Messianic history. This is only the fourth generation from the call of God, and already there has been a significant decline in the chosen race. **This confirms the absolute necessity of the new birth.** The creation of a “*new man*” (Eph 4:24) is not a mere luxury, but is necessary for the conformity of men to the image of Christ. Men can be given every possible advantage, and surrounded with Divine intervention and miracles, and yet fail miserably because they are driven by selfish ambition, which is inherent in the human constitution. At the time of the account being given by Stephen, the envious ones are the best of the human race – not the dregs of it.

Further, the conduct we are

witnessing did not occur in Egypt, but in the promised land, while the patriarchs were sojourning there. Additionally, it did not occur during the famine that would come upon the land, but in a time of plenty, when their flocks could be fed, and food was in apparent abundance.

was needed to take away sin, in order that man’s nature could be changed. That change had to be done by God in all righteousness. However, as long as sin remained, that could not be done. Again, let me emphasize that this does not lessen the wrongness of what the twelve

These observations do not make what the brothers did either right or acceptable. It only shows why a Savior was needed to take away sin, in order that man’s nature could be changed. That change had to be done by God in all righteousness.

Thus, their envy was not driven by dire circumstances, or some unusual external situation. It revealed a fundamental flaw within the human nature.

These observations do not make what the brothers did either right or acceptable. **It only shows why a Savior**

patriarchs did. The fact that men were under the domination of a fallen nature did not make sin less reprehensible. Neither, indeed, did it allow for the excusing of it.

There were at least two reasons why God was longsuffering with such

conduct. First, it was because He was working through it to create circumstances by which the race appointed to bring forth the Messiah would be sustained. **This was being done in a manner that could only yield glory to Himself.** He did not take what men did and convert it to His advantage. Rather, He **created** the circumstances, down to the finest detail, to confirm the whole of the matter was dictated by Him. Second, his longsuffering was **specifically in prospect of the coming Savior, who would bear both the substance and the penalty of all sin.** It is necessary to see these things if we are going to give God due glory.

“made obeisance to him” (Gen 37:9-10).

- ⇨ His brothers envied him, but his father Jacob “observed the saying, or *“kept the matter in mind”*^{NKJV} (Gen 37:11).
- ⇨ While his brothers were feeding Jacob’s flocks in Shechem, he sent Joseph to check on them to see if it was well with them and the flocks (Gen 37:12-14).
- ⇨ After finding Joseph wandering about unable to find his brothers, a man asked him what he was seeking.

point, Joseph had not come to them

- ⇨ When Joseph finally arrived, they stripped him of his coat of many colors – a sign of his father’s favor – and threw him into an empty pit where there was no water (Gen 37:23-24).
- ⇨ The scheming brothers then calmly sat down to eat (Gen 37:25).
- ⇨ While eating, the brothers looked up and saw *“a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt”* (Gen 37:25).
- ⇨ Judah tells the other brothers, *“Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh”* (Gen 37:27a).
- ⇨ His brothers are content with the suggestion (Gen 37:27b).
- ⇨ At that time, *“there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver”* (Gen 37:28a).

Stephen gives an abbreviated statement concerning a rather drawn out affair. In the process of teaching, that is the nature Divine summation. Of course, it assumes that the details of the affair are already known. If that is not true, the summation carries no weight.

THEY SOLD JOSEPH INTO EGYPT

Stephen gives an abbreviated statement concerning a rather drawn out affair. **In the process of teaching, that is the nature Divine summation.** Of course, it assumes that the details of the affair are already known. If that is not true, the summation carries no weight. It will therefore be of profit to briefly outline what led to the sale of Joseph.

Upon telling the man he was seeking his brothers, Joseph asked him if he might know where they were. The man said he seen them, and heard them say they were going to Dothan. Joseph headed there immediately to find his brothers (Gen 37:15-17).

- ⇨ The patriarchs has been provoked to hate their younger brother Joseph because of their father’s preference of him (Gen 27:3-4).
- ⇨ Joseph related his first dream to his brothers, in which he saw all twelve of them binding sheaves of grain. His sheaf stood upright, and their sheaves of grain *“made obeisance,”* or bowed down, to his sheaf (gen 37:5-7).
- ⇨ His brothers *“hated him the more for his words”* (Gen 37:8).
- ⇨ Joseph related a second dream to his father and his brothers in which the sun and moon and the eleven stars

- ⇨ While he was yet *“afar off,”* his brothers saw him coming. Conspiring to slay him, they said, *“Behold, this dreamer cometh. 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”* (Gen 37:18-20).
- ⇨ The older brother, Reuben, heard the plot and delivered Joseph out of their hands, saying *“Let us not kill him”* (Gen 37:21).
- ⇨ Reuben then suggested, *“Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again”* (Gen 37:22). At this

- ⇨ Shortly after this, Reuben returns, and finds Joseph missing from the pit. Because he had intended to deliver him back to Jacob, he cries out, *“The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?”* (Gen 37:30).
- ⇨ The brothers then *“took Joseph’s coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; And they sent the coat of many colors, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son’s coat or no”* (Gen 37:32).
- ⇨ Having received the coat, Jacob recognized it and said, *“It is my son’s coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces”* (Gen 37:33).
- ⇨ The Midianite merchantmen then brought Joseph into Egypt, and *“sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an*

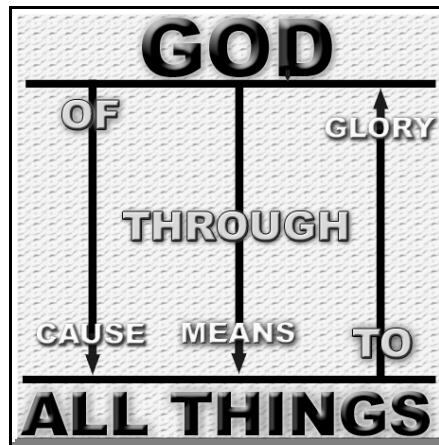
Stephen continues his defense by tracing the development of the nation through the exaltation of Joseph—by Given O. Blakely

officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard" (Gen 37:28b, 36).

All of those remarkable details are summed up in Stephen's words, "And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt" (Acts 7:9). Stephen, speaking through the Spirit of God, will develop the thought that **God was in all of this, giving Joseph protection and favor, and using him to deliver his people.** He will speak with understanding, as well as with power. It was previously stated that he was filled with wisdom. Now he will evidence that wisdom in his summation of the Jewish people, and their development as a nation.

Thus far, with two hundred and twenty-nine words he has covered more than 250 years of Divine involvements with men. He has included the accomplishment of impossible things, unveiled the impotence of nature, and exposed the hardness of the human heart. The power of faith has also been declared, as well as the reality of Divine

direction. Such wonderful things could not possibly be drawn from the wellspring of nature. They deal with matters that are outside of the perimeter of human assessment and wisdom.



WHAT WE ARE BEHOLDING

It is imperative that we have some understanding of the magnitude of the things Stephen is declaring. **He is confirming that God was actually the**

One who was in control of situation the brothers thought they were orchestrating. The world belongs to Him, as well as everything and everyone within it. As it is written, "The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Psa 24:1). This is most precisely stated under the New Covenant, where men are granted a broader perspective of the Lord and the things that he is working in the midst of the earth. Here is how Paul said it: "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom 11:36).

Now we are told this, and it is our responsibility to receive it and conduct our lives accordingly. In the end, when the distracting elements of the present heavens and earth have passed away, it will all be made plain – crystal clear. Until that time, we are to live with the revelation of these things in mind. By so doing, we will be able to maintain our lives "in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim 2:2), thereby bringing glory to God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

BUT GOD WAS WITH HIM

"... but God was with him."

Other versions read, "yet God was with him,"^{NASB} and "But God was with Joseph."^{GWN}

At this point, it appeared as though everything was against Joseph. He was **powerless** to stop his brothers from despising him. He was **unable** to restrain them from throwing him into a pit. He was **helpless** to thwart them selling him to a band of Midianite slave-traders. It appeared as though Joseph could have said the same thing his father affirmed: "all these things are against me" (Gen 42:36). According to appearance, he could have cried out in the words of the Psalmist, "Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round" (Psa 22:12). So far as experience in the body was concerned, Joseph could have said with Paul that he was, "pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that

we despaired even of life" (2 Cor 1:8).

At this point, his real circumstance – the one that had to do with his identity with God, was hidden from view. Scripture apprizes us that Joseph was "seventeen" at this time (Gen 37:2), and already it appears as though his world has fallen apart. He was the favored son of his father, and yet upon being sent on a mission to his brethren, he had fallen on hard times, becoming subject to the venomous hatred of his own brothers. He had been raised among a covenanted people, and now he is in the midst of heathens, and headed for a heathen country. **The whole affair would have been greatly compounded if he had been taught some of the doctrines that have been loosed during our time.**

However, here is a fact that was not so apparent – nevertheless, it was absolutely true: "God was with Him." He

was with him when Joseph was hated by his brothers. He was with him when they threw Him into the waterless pit. He was with him when they sold him to the Midianite merchants. And, He was with Him when he entered into Egypt – a foreign land where the people spoke in a language he did not understand (Psa 81:5). God was with Joseph when he was away from his homeland. He was with him in all of His power, thoughtfully monitoring all of his affairs and controlling his circumstances – grievous though they were. True to His nature, the Lord would not allow Joseph to be tested above what he was able to bear, but would always provide a way of escape, that he might be able to bear it (1 Cor 10:13). Sometimes that door would be one out of which he would have to run, knowing that false charges would be leveled against him. Other times, it would be a door of special favor during adverse circumstances. However you

choose to view it, “*God was with him.*”

In the narrative of the historical events - from the time he was thrown into the pit until he was imprisoned in Egypt (Gen 37:4-39:21) – there are a few references to the Lord being with him. All of them are Divine explanations, and none of them are observations made by Joseph – although I do not doubt that he was aware to a significant degree of their reality.

⇒ **IN POTIPHAR’S HOUSE.** “*And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian*” (Gen 39:2). Keep in mind that Joseph may very well have still been a teenager. He was seventeen when he came into Egypt, and we have no idea how long he was in Potiphar’s house, or how long it was before Potiphar had him imprisoned.

⇒ **POTIPHAR SAW IT.** “*And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand*” (Gen 39:3).

⇒ **POTIPHAR BLESSED FOR JOSEPH’S SAKE.** “*And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field*” (Gen 39:5).

⇒ **IN PRISON.** “*But the LORD was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison*” (Gen 39:21).

None of these texts had to do with a contemporary verbal articulation of the facts. **All of them were after-the-fact, and had to do with assessment.** They were more of a Divine commentary on the circumstances. Potiphar, for example, knew that Joseph prospered in everything he did, but could not trace it back to Jehovah – the God of the Hebrews. If he could have done this he never would have believed his wife’s allegation against Joseph, or had him incarcerated. It was the same with the prison-keeper. His assessment of Joseph

was driven by God giving Joseph favor in his sight – not by insight.

In the case of Joseph, God being “*with him*” translated into the following:

⇒ His enemies could not fully implement their will against him (his brothers, Potiphar’s wife, and Potiphar himself).

⇒ He was given favor in the eyes of certain key people, when it was sorely needed (Potiphar during the beginning of his stay in Egypt).

⇒ He was given favor in the eyes of the keeper of the prison. This was not traced to any extensive assessment of the prison keeper, but to the fact that God was showing Joseph mercy.

All of this confirms that Divine

21:20). At one point in Isaac’s life, Abimelech confessed, “*We saw certainly that the Lord was with thee*” (Gen 26:28). Earlier, Jacob had said of his life, “*God, who answered me in the day of my distress, was with me in the way that I went*” (Gen 35:3). These represent at least the majority of the texts that affirmed Divine accompaniment. Of course, all of them were actually written long after the time of Joseph. At the very best, they were known because those who had the experience spoke of them to their peers. **The point to be seen is that the experience of God’s presence was very rare, and the knowledge of such times were even more unusual.**

Now, however, in the day of the open heavens, and access to God, we have certain promises of the presence of the Lord that, in number and nature, have no parallel in antiquity.

These represent at least the majority of the texts that affirmed Divine accompaniment. Of course, all of them were actually written long after the time of Joseph. At the very best, they were known because those who had the experience spoke of them to their peers. The point to be seen is that the experience of God’s presence was very rare, and the knowledge of such times were even more unusual.

consideration cannot always be deduced from circumstance. It is something that becomes cognitive through the peculiar prerogative of faith.

OUR TIME

The present time is far superior to the times during which Joseph lived. He had no Scripture – we do. So far as the Scriptural record of the times prior to Joseph, there had never been an uttered commitment stating that God would be with any individual. In his communication with Noah God said, “with thee will I establish My covenant” (Gen 6:18). God had told Abraham, “Behold, My covenant is *with thee*” (Gen 17:4). As Esau was growing up, it is written, “*And God was with the lad*” (Gen

⇒ “*He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him*” (John 14:21).

⇒ “*Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him*” (John 14:23).

⇒ “*I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*” (Matt 28:20).

⇒ “*Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself,*

except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye **abide in Me**" (John 15:4).

- ⇒ "For **I am with thee**, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:10).
- ⇒ "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God **dwell in you**. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom 8:9).
- ⇒ "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead **dwell in you**, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that **dwelleth in you**" (Rom 8:11).
- ⇒ "God is faithful, by whom ye were **called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord**" (1 Cor 1:9).
- ⇒ "And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that **God is in you of a truth**" (1 Cor 14:25).
- ⇒ "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, **I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people**" (2 Cor 6:16).

- ⇒ "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that **Jesus Christ is in you**, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor 13:5).
- ⇒ "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until **Christ be formed in you**" (Gal 4:19).
- ⇒ "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and **in you all**" (Eph 4:6).
- ⇒ "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath **begun a good work in you** will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:6).
- ⇒ "For it is God which **worketh in you both to will** and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil 2:13).
- ⇒ "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory**" (Col 1:27).
- ⇒ "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, **I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee**" (Heb 13:5).
- ⇒ "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting

covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, **working in you that which is wellpleasing in His sight**, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Heb 13:20-21).

- ⇒ "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is **He that is in you**, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

The point to be seen is that a much higher level of confidence is expected from those who are in Christ Jesus than all of the godly who went before them. It is said of the most noble of all the ancients, "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: **God having provided some better thing for us**, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Heb 11:39-40). It is unconscionable for those to whom superior benefits have been vouchsafed to display results vastly inferior to those to whom less was given.

These are things that do need to be spoken to those who are engaged in "the good fight of faith" (1 Tim 6:12). The fierceness of the battle in which we are engaged requires that good soldiers (2 Tim 2:3) be apprised of the presence of their Lord. To deprive them of this witness is to make them vulnerable to the foe, and thus cause them to fight uncertainly. God will not excuse such behavior! Divine commitments are to be declared to each generation.

GOD DELIVERED HIM OUT OF ALL HIS AFFLICTIONS

^{10a} **And delivered him out of all his afflictions . . .**" Other versions read, "delivered him out of all his troubles," NKJV "rescued him from all his afflictions," NASB "rescued him from all of his troubles," NIV "delivered him out of all of his anguish" LIVING "Joseph had many troubles there, but God rescued him from them all," IE "delivered him from all his distressing afflictions," AMPLIFIED "saved him from all his troubles," PHILLIPS "delivered him out of all his adversities," BISHOPS "delivered him out of all his

tribulations," DARBY and "rescued him from all of his suffering," GWN

Here the language is very definitive. The King James Version reads precisely correct – "out of." Some versions read "from," but this is not exact enough. The words "out of" are translated from the Greek word ἐκ (ek). Lexically, the word denotes the area from which the specified action takes place. In this case, Joseph's "afflictions" were the locus out of which God delivered him. The word



“from” could mean God delivered from the circumstance itself, so that Joseph would not have experienced the affliction at all. That God can, and sometimes does, in fact, do this, cannot be denied. But that is certainly not the point Stephen is emphasizing here. Here, the point is that Joseph was **in the affliction**, and God extracted him from it, so that he was not overcome. In this way, the purpose of God could not be overthrown, but was actually worked out in the midst of adversity. This, of course, accrued to the glory of God, which is the dominant trait in everything that He does.

THE NATURE OF DELIVERANCE

It is the manner of God to deliver out from an adverse condition. Take, for example, the deliverance of the entire natural order that has been scheduled on the Divine calendar. Of the creation Paul writes that it will be *“delivered from the bondage of corruption”* (Rom 8:21). Already, for at least 6,000 years, creation has been dominated by corruption, and is enslaved to it. Yet, that domination is scheduled to terminate at the word of the Lord, and creation will make a complete exit from corruption and degeneration.

Paul spoke of deliverance as occurring in three dimensions – past, present, and future. *“Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us”* (2 Cor 1:10). All of this postulates that the circumstances from which deliverance takes place cannot be broken by the wisdom of men, or any form of human initiative. **The rescue has to come from God, and it has to come in His own time.** Until that deliverance comes, the Lord will so sustain the individual that he will not be overcome by the circumstances, and the foe will not be able to rejoice in triumph.

Deliverance is like this in order that God might receive the glory.

JOSEPH'S DELIVERANCE

The nature of Joseph's “afflictions” is spelled out in several places.

⇒ **HIS BROTHERS INTENT TO KILL HIM.** *“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” (Gen 37:20).

⇒ **FILLED WITH ANGUISH.** Prior to being thrown into a pit, Joseph suffered anguish and pled for his brothers not to do this. *“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”* (Gen 42:21).

⇒ **THROWN INTO A PIT.** *“And they took*

⇒ **IN PRISON TWO MORE YEARS.** *“And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river”* (Gen 41:1).

⇒ **FEET HURT WITH FETTERS.** *“He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him. The king sent and loosed him: even the ruler of the people, and let him go free”* (Psa 105:17-20).

There is a lesson to be learned here concerning Kingdom manners. It at once becomes evident that well being in this world does not equate to the Lord being with the individual. If that was the case, it might be argued that God was with Joseph's brothers, for they managed to rid themselves of his influence – at least for a season. It might also be supposed that the Lord was with Potiphar's wife, for she had her will – at least for a season.

him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it” (Gen 37:24).

⇒ **SOLD TO MERCHANTS.** *“Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt”* (Gen 37:28).

⇒ **A LANGUAGE HE DID NOT UNDERSTAND.** *“This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt: where I heard a language that I understood not”* (Psa 81:5).

⇒ **IMPRISONED.** *“And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison”* (Gen 39:20).

⇒ **FORGOTTEN.** *“Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him”* (Gen 40:23).

Although all of these circumstances were grievous, the perpetrators never realized their objectives. God delivered Joseph “out of all his afflictions.” He did not deliver him from the initial experience of the afflictions, but from their dominancy and duration. From the devil's point of view, the purpose of affliction is to make an end of the afflicted one. From God's point of view, it is to test and prepare the suffering one, and to bring glory to Himself. **Because God is, in fact, “above all,” it is His will that is ultimately realized.** All other intentions finally fall to the ground in absolute defeat.

Joseph himself, speaking from an illuminated point of view, assessed the difficulties from which he had been delivered. *“. . . 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: and He hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and*

lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt” (Gen 45:8). Again he said, *“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**”* (Gen 50:20).

Behold what marvelous things God accomplished.

- ⇒ He sent Joseph into Egypt to preserve life.
- ⇒ He sent Joseph into Egypt to preserve a posterity in the earth – the lineage through which the Messiah would come.
- ⇒ He sent Joseph into Egypt to accomplish a great deliverance – when a great host of people would be delivered at the time of the exodus.
- ⇒ God made Joseph an advising father to Pharaoh.

⇒ God made Joseph the lord over all of Pharaoh’s house.

⇒ God made Joseph a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

⇒ Through Joseph God saved much people alive.

And how were all of these things accomplished? **It was by means of hatred, envy, enslavement, false accusation, imprisonment, and being forgotten.** This by no means sanctified the malicious treatment of Joseph. However, it did confirm that the work was wholly wrought by God. It was not the result of human strategizing.

A LESSON TO BE LEARNED

There is a lesson to be learned here concerning Kingdom manners. **It at once becomes evident that well being in this world does not equate to the Lord being with the individual.** If that was the case, it might be argued that God was

with Joseph’s brothers, for they managed to rid themselves of his influence – at least for a season. It might also be supposed that the Lord was with Potiphar’s wife, for she had her will – at least for a season. Of course, all of that is obviously foolish, because we have been given the record of the outcome of the events. However, God has not changed, and His Kingdom still functions in this way. The people of God are still experiencing oppression, and doing so unjustly. **Yet, in it all the Lord is working out His purpose, preparing His people to rein with Christ, and publicly showing the ultimate futility of opposing those upon whom the favor of God rests.**

Those who equate outward well being with the care of the Lord are not thinking properly. Their thinking has been skewed by covetousness. Sometimes well being and prosperity are nothing more than confirmations that the people have been set in *“slippery places”* (Psa 73:18), and will soon come tumbling down.

GOD GAVE JOSEPH FAVOR AND WISDOM IN PHARAOH’S SIGHT

^{10b} . . . **and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.”**

Stephen is careful to point out that it was God who was at work behind the scenes. He was, in fact, working all things together for His own glory, for the good of Joseph, and the preservation Abraham’s seed. **However, deliverance is not the only thing that was accomplished.** With God, deliverance is not an end of itself, but is a means to a higher end, or purpose.

GAVE HIM FAVOR AND WISDOM

“ . . . and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt . . .” Other versions read, *“gave him wisdom and favor in the presence of Pharaoh,”*^{NKJV} *“gave Joseph wisdom and enabled him to gain the goodwill of Pharaoh king of Egypt,”*^{NIV} *“gave him wisdom and the approval of Pharaoh, king of Egypt,”*^{BBE} *“When Joseph stood in the presence of Pharaoh (the king of*

Egypt), God gave Joseph Divine favor and wisdom,”^{GWN} *“granted him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, the king of Egypt,”*^{NAB} *“making him so wise that he won the favor of Pharaoh king of Egypt,”*^{NJB} *“God gave him favor before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. God also gave Joseph unusual wisdom,”*^{NLT} *“Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, liked Joseph and respected him, because of the wisdom which God gave Joseph,”*^{IE} *“He allowed him to win favor and show wisdom before Pharaoh,”*^{ISV} *“gave him grace and wisdom, when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt,”*^{MONTGOMERY} *“and won him goodwill and favor and wisdom and understanding in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt,”*^{AMPLIFIED} *“God made him so wise that the Egyptian king Pharaoh thought highly of him,”*^{CEV} and *“When Joseph appeared before the king of Egypt, God gave him a pleasing manner and wisdom.”*^{GNB}

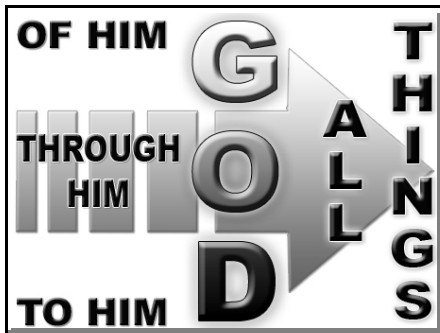
The idea here is that God determined how Pharaoh thought of Joseph. The relationship between Pharaoh and Joseph was dictated by the

Lord Himself. This was because the outcome of that association would save alive a people, preserve a godly posterity, and lead to a great deliverance – all of which would accrue to the long-lasting glory of the God of heaven. In this word from Stephen, a statement will be confirmed that would be made hundreds of years later: i.e. *“the heavens do rule”* (Dan 4:26). As Nebuchadnezzar can confirm, there is no question about the earth being in ultimate subjection to the heavens. The government of all things is located in the dwelling place of God, not man. The history of Joseph confirms this,

Centuries after the statement in Daniel, another affirmation would be made that is confirmed by Stephen’s words: *“For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are **all things:** to whom be glory for ever. Amen”* (Rom 11:36). **This is a more extensive view of the heavens ruling, and is spoken in view of the removal of sin and the enthronement of the Lord Jesus.** The ultimate Source or Cause of all things is declared to be God.

He is also the means through which all things are being done. That is, His hand is involved in the affairs of men, thereby ensuring that everything will accrue to His glory. That too is confirmed in Joseph's impressive life.

Whatever people may think of the volitional capacities of man, their thoughts must take into consideration that God can cause one man to be favored by another. He can cause wisdom to so abound in one man, that another man can marvel, and be inclined to submit to that wisdom. **It is wholly improper to maintain any view of man that rejects or modifies the clear declaration that the Source, Means, and Objective of all things is God Himself.**



It is not possible that Stephen is speaking the truth if these things are not so. I hardly see how there is allowance for a theological millimeter, or for even the slightest departure from this truth.

"Favor"

By "*favor*," the text means that Pharaoh was glad to see Joseph, and was very pleased with his presence. He was inclined toward Joseph, and saw no threat of competition in him. **There was a wholesome attractiveness in Joseph that was perceived to a measurable extent by Pharaoh.** It brought to the king the comfortableness with Joseph that would ordinarily have been developed over a period of time in which the virtues of Joseph would have been established through extended association with him. Although he was brought straight from the prison, Joseph was received without hesitation by Pharaoh, just as though he was the king's own well beloved son – and all upon the basis of the testimony of another former prisoner. Speaking as a man, this is a most remarkable

circumstance. **Speaking as one who believes on Christ, knowing that the heavens do rule, it is what we should expect.**

This favor was not the result of any solicitation of consideration by Joseph. **It was a gift from God.** This postulates that the Lord has control over the hearts of men, and can, at will, turn them as the rivers of water (Prov 21:1). Already, the Lord had given Joseph "*favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison*" (Gen 39:21). You may recall that, many years later, when Israel would come out of Egyptian bondage, the Lord "*gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians*" (Ex 11:3; 12:36). Solomon once said, "*When a man's ways please the LORD, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him*" (Prov 16:7). I have found this to be an elixir of comfort in circumstances that could prove to be disconcerting.

"Wisdom"

By "*wisdom*," the text means Pharaoh was very impressed with Joseph's understanding – the broad range of his knowledge in various subjects. This particularly included the interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams (Gen 41:1-7; 15-32), and Joseph's word on addressing the dilemma that would be created by a prolonged famine that would be preceded by seven years of extraordinary harvest (Gen 41:33-37). It is equally plain that Joseph must have spoken with obvious confidence and without hesitating or flawed speech. His words must have appeared as though they had been well studied and organized, even though they were spoken with apparent immediacy. **It appears to me that discernment and aptitude were mingled effectively on an almost instant basis – as Joseph spoke.** Jesus indicated that such a thing was the manner of inspiration: "*it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak*" (Matt 10:19). Thus a grasp of the situation, discernment of the circumstantial details, and a thorough understanding of what to do, were given to Joseph all at once – probably as Pharaoh related his dreams to Joseph.

The interpretation of the dream, then, was a display of immediate wisdom. God gave him the ability to

interpret the dream, versus an angel telling him the meaning, as with Daniel (Dan 8:15-27), and Zechariah (Zech 1:9-21; 4:5-14). **I gather this means the meaning of the dream became very clear to Joseph, as well as how to respond to it.** His directions to Pharaoh flowed from understanding. That is, **he actually comprehended what he was saying.** We know this is the case, else he could not have been the administrator of the affairs in Egypt.

The Details of Joseph's Understanding

Pharaoh made known the two dreams that he had.

- ⇒ First, Pharaoh dreamed that as he stood by the river, seven fine looking and fat cows came up out of the river and fed in a meadow. Then seven ugly and gaunt cows came out of the river and ate up the seven fine looking and fat cows.
- ⇒ Second, he dreamed that seven heads of grain came up on one stalk, being plump and good. Then seven thin heads, blighted by the east wind sprang up after them. The seven thin heads devoured the seven plump and full heads.

Speaking as a man, this is what Joseph had to work with. Here is the expression of the wisdom that was given to him.

- ⇒ The two dreams had one meaning (41:25a).
- ⇒ The dreams informed Pharaoh of what **God** was going to do (41:25b).
- ⇒ The seven good cows and the seven full ears were seven years of plenty, and meant the same thing (41:26).
- ⇒ The seven thin cows and seven empty ears were seven years of famine (41:27).
- ⇒ Again, Joseph emphasized that this spoke of "*What **God** was about to do*" (41:28).
- ⇒ Seven years of plenty would come throughout all the land of Egypt (41:29).

That, among many other things, is what makes spiritual Babylon so damning. It robs God of His glory, gives the advantage to the devil, and corrupts the minds of men. Those are ultimate disadvantages!

- ⇒ After those plenteous years, seven years of famine would come in which *“all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt, and the famine shall consume the land”* (41:30).
- ⇒ The plenty would not be known in the land by reason of the famine, for it would be very grievous (41:31).
- ⇒ The dream had been doubled, Joseph said, *“because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass”* (Gen 41:32a).
- ⇒ The dream would *“shortly come to pass”* (41:32b).
- ⇒ Joseph told Pharaoh to find a man *“discreet and wise, and set him over all the land of Egypt”* (41:33).
- ⇒ Officers were to be appointed over the land, and charged with gathering 20% of the harvest during the seven plenteous years (41:34).
- ⇒ The food that was gathered was to be laid up in store under Pharaoh and kept in the cities (41:35).
- ⇒ The food that was stored would be used to sustain the land through the famine (41:36).

Behold the nature of the wisdom that was given to Joseph.

- ⇒ He defined the source of the dream.
- ⇒ He interpreted why Pharaoh was given two dreams.
- ⇒ He identified the dreams had to do with what God was going to do.
- ⇒ He defined the time in which the commencement of the dreams would

take place.

- ⇒ He defined what to do during the time of plenty.
- ⇒ He defined how to go about the activities during the years of plenty.
- ⇒ He defined how to sustain the people during the famine.

It is remarkable to consider the details of the wisdom given to Joseph. His answer concerning Pharaoh’s dreams was a **thorough** answer, with no part of the dream remaining mysterious. The appropriate reaction to the dream was also specified.

In all of this we see the nature of *“wisdom and spiritual understanding”* (Col 1:9). It is not a mere routine, nor is it a kind of quick-fix. Rather, **true wisdom leads a person into harmony with what the Lord is doing, so that even the grievous circumstances do not cause ultimate harm to the wise one.**

MADE HIM GOVERNOR OVER EGYPT

“ . . .and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.” Other versions read, *“governor over Egypt and all his household,”*^{NASB} *“ruler over Egypt and all his palace,”*^{NIV} *“chief administrator over Egypt and over all his household,”*^{CJB} *“governor over all of Egypt and put him in charge of the palace,”*^{NLT} *“governor over all Egypt, as well as putting him in charge of all the affairs of the palace.”*^{LIVING} *“the job of being governor of Egypt. He even allowed Joseph to rule over all the people in Pharaoh’s house,”*^{IE} *“Governor over Egypt, and over all the royal household,”*^{MONTGOMERY} and *“governor of Egypt and put him in charge of his own entire*

household.”^{PHILLIPS}

The sequence of the times and events that brought Joseph to this point accent Divine preparation.

- ⇒ His first responsibility at around the age of seventeen – to find his brothers and report to his father as to the well being of them and the flocks they were feeding (Gen 37:13-14).
- ⇒ At a young age, probably within proximity of his seventeenth year, he was made responsible for the affairs of the household of Potiphar, the captain of the king’s guard (Gen 37:36; 39:1-4).
- ⇒ When imprisoned with the king’s prisoners, all of the prisoners were committed into his hand so that whatever they did became the execution of his will (Gen 39:20-23).
- ⇒ He becomes the governor over all the land of Egypt, with only the Pharaoh himself not being subject to him (Gen 41:40-44; 42:6).

It becomes apparent that in all of his experiences, Joseph was being groomed for the ultimate position to which he was assigned – the governor or Egypt. In fact, Scripture affirms that he was *“sent”* by God into the land of Egypt to preserve the life of Abraham’s seed (Gen 45:5,7,8; 50:20; Psa 105:17).

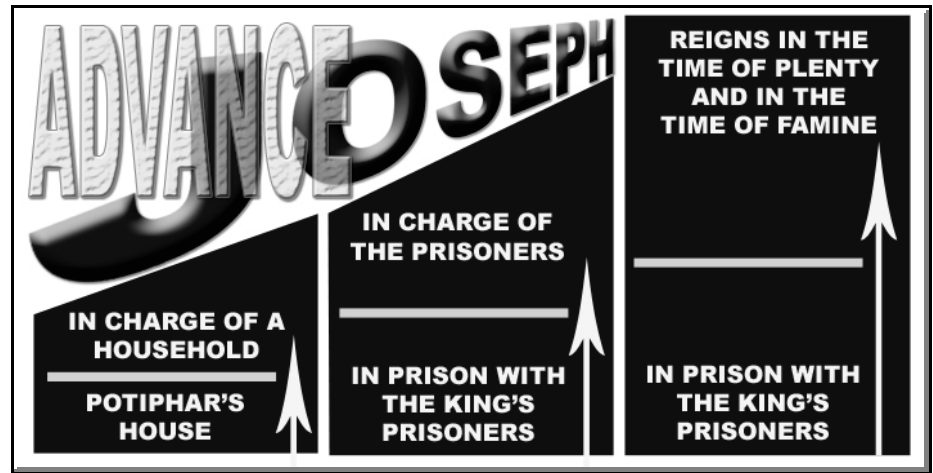
A Good Steward

As we might expect, Joseph proved to be a faithful steward, thus confirming that he was, in fact, chosen by God and placed in the positions that he occupied. He was **intended** to fulfill the work that he accomplished, and was **gifted** and **strengthened** to that end.

The extent of Joseph’s faithfulness in this stewardship is most arresting to consider. He handled what was given to him to the glory of God, and never sought to exploit his stewardship for personal advantage. Here are a few of the things he handled so well.

- ⇒ His father’s love and favor.
- ⇒ His father’s will, faithfully obeying him in his commissions.

- ⇒ His brother's rejection.
- ⇒ The responsibility of Potiphar's household and affairs.
- ⇒ The responsibility to remain morally pure.
- ⇒ Extraordinary suffering that extended over a considerable period of time.
- ⇒ Being away from home, and being answerable to no member of his father's household.
- ⇒ The care and commission of the prisoners over whom he was made a steward,
- ⇒ Opportunities that were vouchsafed to him, such as befriending the baker and the butler and interpreting their dreams.
- ⇒ The wisdom that was given to him – employing it at the appropriate times, before the proper people, and by giving appropriate directions.
- ⇒ The handling of special favor, namely that of Potiphar, the prison keeper, and Pharaoh.
- ⇒ Being prosperous.
- ⇒ The gathering of provisions at the appointed time.
- ⇒ The distribution of required



resources at the proper time, to the proper people, and in the appropriate manner.

In all of these things, Joseph proved to be a most excellent and detailed type of the Lord Jess Himself. His exemplary life also confirms that being given a work from God involves infinitely more than an exalted position and personal advantage. It also involves faithfulness, giving the proper glory to

the one making the assignment, maintaining moral and spiritual integrity, and being quick to recognize the appropriate response, and then execute it. **All of these varied responsibilities are accented and made**

possible by faith.

However, when religion becomes codified and institutionalized, these things are all blurred, and *“sinful flesh”* is given the advantage. **You might say that it is always wrong to institutionalize what God has personalized.** It is equally never appropriate to seek to gain personal advantage from something that has been expressly designed to bring glory to God and sustain His initiatives. Over the years, I have witnessed a near-total obscuring of these things. That, among many other things, is what makes spiritual Babylon so damning. **It robs God of His glory, gives the advantage to the devil, and corrupts the minds of men.** Those are ultimate disadvantages!

THERE CAME A DEARTH

⁴¹ Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance.”

Confirming that a word purporting to be from God is of no value if it does not come to pass, a time of famine came, just as Joseph said. He was a true prophet.

THERE CAME A GREAT DEARTH

“Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan . . . ” Other versions read, *“Now a famine a came,”*^{NASB} *“a famine struck,”*^{NIV} *“there*

came a famine throughout,” *“there was no food to be had,”*^{BBE} *“a famine developed,”*^{LIVING} *“the whole land of Egypt and the land of Canaan became dry, so that crops couldn’t grow there”*^{IE} and *“a famine spread all over.”*^{WILLIAMS}

The word *“dearth”* means *“deprivation of food, hunger, the failure of grain harvests, famine,”*^{FRIBERG} and *“a widespread lack of food over a considerable period of time, resulting in hunger for many people.”*^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

Genesis refers to this period as *“seven years of dearth”* (Gen 41:54). It is also written that it was ***“in all lands”***

(Gen 41:56), that ***“all the land was famished”*** (Gen 41:55), and that ***“the famine was over all the face of the earth”*** (Gen 41:56). As the famine extended itself, it *“was sore”* [severe] ***“in all the land”*** (Gen 43:1). During the famine there was *“neither earing nor harvest,”* or plowing or harvesting. That is, the fields were not planted, cultivated, or reaped (Gen 45:6). The famine is said to have affected *“all counties”* (Gen 41:57).

The Psalmist accounts for this very famine: ***“Moreover HE called for a famine upon the land: HE brake the whole staff of bread”*** (Psa 105:16). When

Joseph prophesied of the famine he told Pharaoh that God was showing him “*what HE is about to do*” (Gen 41:25,28). This was not a singular incident of such a work from God. In the days of the prophet Elisha God also “*called for a famine*” – and it was also for “*seven years*” (2 Kgs 8:1).

Simplistic Theology

It is not good for men to adopt overly simplistic and intellectually inferior views of God. For some, God is seen as never generating harm, affliction, or other such things. Such views are entertained even though a clear record has been given of God sending a world-destroying flood (2 Pet 2:5), and burning up multiple cities that were densely populated (Gen 13:10; Lk 17:29). This is not to mention the Lord plaguing Pharaoh and his house in the days of Abraham (Gen 12:17), making plagues and sicknesses come upon wayward Israel (Deut 28:59; 29:22), sending poisonous snakes among the people (Num 21:6), and sending pestilences upon Israel (1 Chron 21:14).

Those, therefore, who affirm that nothing grievous comes from the Lord, are wholly wrong. They are also intellectually and spiritually dishonest, for the Lord has revealed too much on this matter to warrant any ignorance concerning it. God Himself challenges such sophists: “*shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?*” (Amos 3:6). Again the Lord declares, “*I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these things*”^{NKJV} (Isa 45:7). **Rather than such things never coming from God, they are never generated independently of Him.** Satan cannot will calamity, trouble, and sorrow into existence. As wicked and diabolical as he is, he cannot operate independently of God. Technically speaking, he is not engaged in a struggle with God, for God cannot be challenged, by any created personalities. The very concept of God requires this postulate. When, for example, Satan was expelled from heaven, it was accomplished by angels, though mandated by Deity (Rev 12:7-9). When he is depicted as being thrown into the bottomless pit, or being locked up, it is an angel that does it (Rev 20:1-3).

Distorted views of God are lethal to the soul, for they constrain people to speak and live foolishly – without being conscious of facts of the matter.

AND GREAT AFFLICTION

“*. . . and great affliction . . .*” Other versions read, “*great trouble*,”^{NKJV} “*great affliction with it*,”^{NASB} “*bring great suffering*,”^{NIV} “*and great distress*,”^{DARBY} “*There was great misery*,”^{NLT} “*great tribulation*,”^{YLT} and “*This made people suffer miserably*.”^{IE}

There really is no such thing as a pleasant and convenient famine, or one in which men do not suffer. This is because a famine – particularly in this case – becomes the context in which the Lord Himself works for His own glory.

Words describing the affliction experienced during this famine include the following:

⇒ “*And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread*” (Gen 41:55).

⇒ “*. . . all the Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence? for the money faileth*” (Gen 47:15).

⇒ “*Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land? buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh: and give us seed, that we may live, and not die, that the land be not desolate*” (Gen 47:19).

⇒ “*Moreover He called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread*” (Psa 105:16).

We are apparently spared many of the details of the suffering attending this famine. From other accounts, we do know that famines can be so grievous that people resort to cannibalism, even eating their own children (Deut 28:53; 2 Kgs 6:28).

When, therefore, the text states, “*and great affliction*,” we may be sure that this was not an overstatement of the

There really is no such thing as a pleasant and convenient famine, or one in which men do not suffer. This is because a famine – particularly in this case – becomes the context in which the Lord Himself works for His own glory.

⇒ “*And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands*” (Gen 41:57).

⇒ “*Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die*” (Gen 42:1-2).

situation, or an exaggeration.

OUR FATHERS FOUND NO SUSTENANCE

“*. . . and our fathers found no sustenance*.” Other versions read, “*our fathers could find no food*,”^{NASB} “*our fathers were not able to get food*,”^{BBE} “*our fathers lacked food*,”^{M RD} “*our ancestors could find nothing to eat*,”^{NJB} “*our ancestors ran out of food*,”^{NLT} “*their food was gone*,”^{LIVING} “*our fathers could not find the simplest food*,”^{WILLIAMS} and “*our forefathers could find no fodder [for the cattle] or vegetable sustenance [for their*

households].”AMPLIFIED

Although “all lands” were impacted by the famine, the Scriptures focus on Egypt and Canaan.

- ⇒ “And there was no bread in all the land: for the famine was very sore, so that the land of Egypt and all the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine” (Gen 47:13).
- ⇒ “And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh’s house” (Gen 47:14)

was being governed by God in view of Abraham’s seed. That, of course, is why all things are worked together for the good of those who love God and are the called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28). Such purposeful working would not be possible if God was not governing the affairs of men.

The real issue here was the purposed expansion of Abraham’s seed. That would require them multiplying in another land until they were of sufficient size to occupy the land of promise. In fact, even when they had grown to a significant size, and entered the promised land, God enabled them to take the land a little at a time, lest it be overrun with

set of Divinely orchestrated circumstances to get the fledgling band of Israelites – seventy in number from the standpoint of Joseph, and seventy-five from the viewpoint of the division of the land – where they would multiply until there were sufficient Israelites to manage the land of promise.

THE FOOD RAN OUT

During the famine, all of the food resources ran out – in both Egypt and Canaan. They ran out in Egypt in order to prepare the way for the exaltation of Joseph, who would give preference to the Hebrews. They ran out in Canaan in order that they might eventually migrate into Egypt where their appointed multiplication would take place.

Even though the people in both Egypt and Canaan still had some money with which they could buy grain, the money of those in Canaan meant nothing in their own land, for money cannot create resources. Now, they must use their money to buy corn, even until their money runs out. The money of the Egyptians ran out in order that they might become Pharaoh’s servants, and thus be congenial toward Israel while they were multiplying. The money ran out in for the Israelites in order that they might be sustained in Egypt by Joseph while they were multiplying.

Here we note that purchasing corn in Egypt never entered the minds of Abraham’s seed UNTIL all of their corn was consumed. In this a Kingdom principle is seen. Men will not seek “the true riches” until they see the poverty of what the world has to offer. As long as the world is perceived as a valid resource, Divine benefits will not be sought with any fervency or consistency.

In this a Kingdom principle is seen. Men will not seek “the true riches” until they see the poverty of what the world has to offer. As long as the world is perceived as a valid resource, Divine benefits will not be sought with any fervency or consistency.

- ⇒ “And when money failed in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence? for the money faileth” (Gen 47:15).

The reason for this focus ought to be plain. These were the two countries in which Abraham’s seed were found at the time. Jacob and sixty-six of his family were in Canaan (Gen 46:26), and Joseph and his sons were in Egypt (Gen 46:27). All other nations, regardless of the grief experienced in them because of the famine, were incidental. The whole world

wild beasts because of the relative fewness of Israel. Therefore, before they entered into the land, Moses told them, “And the LORD thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little: thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee” (Deut 7:22). Seven of the nations that were occupying the land were larger than Israel (Deut 7:1). Yet, Israel was to drive them out and occupy their place. They would therefore have to grow in number to fully occupy the land. These conditions are precisely why all of the things mentioned in our text took place – the selling of Joseph into Egypt, his exaltation, and the famine. It was a

JACOB HEARD THERE WAS CORN IN EGYPT

¹² “But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.”

Here we will see how the Lord gives supplies to His people. He brings them within their reach, or makes them

aware of the supplies. Then, they must gather them in. This is how the Lord provides for the animal kingdom. Thus the Psalmist wrote, “So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. There go the ships: there is that

leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein. These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good” (Psa 104:25-28). Thus from the small to the great of the animal

kingdom, all are dependent upon the Lord for their sustenance, and they wait for His provisions. **God faithfully delivers the supplies, but they must gather them, and often with considerable effort.**

This principle was lived out as Israel journeyed through the wilderness. They were wholly dependent upon the Lord for their sustenance, and He delivered it to them every day in the form of manna. **However, they had to go out and gather it, bringing it into their home where it could be prepared** (Ex 16:15-18).

The parallel in spiritual life is obvious. Divine provisions for the heart, and soul, and mind are provided. **But they must be gathered with deliberation and intention.** The person who does not extend himself to appropriate what God has provided will eventually succumb.

WHEN JACOB HEARD

“But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt . . .” Other versions read, *“heard that there was grain in Egypt,”* ^{NKJV} *“hearing that there was grain in Egypt,”* ^{BBE} *“having heard of there being corn in Egypt,”* ^{DARBY} *“heard that Egypt had food,”* ^{GWN} *“heard that there were supplies in Egypt,”* ^{NJB} *“heard that there was still grain in Egypt,”* ^{LIVING} *“heard that there was wheat in Egypt,”* ^{IE} and *“heard that there was wheat to be had.”* ^{WEYMOUTH}

Jacob was alert. Although there was a grievous famine all around him, and supplies were dwindling, he did not despair. He was listening for some good word, and finally he heard it: *“there was corn in Egypt.”* The text does not mean that he merely heard the Egyptians had food, but that there was food in Egypt that he could appropriate for his family – there was **available** food.

The historical account to which Stephen refers is found in Genesis. *“Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? And he said, Behold, **I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die**”* (Gen 42:1-2).

We see in this how faith keeps hope alive, so that the heart remains alert and able to detect any door opened

by the Sovereign God. It is one thing for the body to grow faint, but it is quite another thing for the human spirit to do so. Thus Solomon wrote, *“The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?”* (Prov 18:14). Faith gives the individual the advantage during such occasions, so that a word of hope can be heard and appropriate action taken.

God’s Way Not Man’s Way

God’s ways and thoughts are not like those of mere men. Thus God said to

The Individual Is Not The Main Thing

We can also see in this record that God did not cater to the individual needs. He rather harmonized His works with His purpose. Because of this, those who were involved in that purpose received the primary advantage.

The Supply Was Located Elsewhere

It also ought to be noted that the supply of food was positioned away from where Jacob and his progeny found themselves. The food was in Egypt, and they were in Canaan.

In this a Kingdom principle is seen. Men will not seek “the true riches” until they see the poverty of what the world has to offer. As long as the world is perceived as a valid resource, Divine benefits will not be sought with any fervency or consistency.

wayward Israel, *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD”* (Isa 55:8). When considering *the natural man*, so far as the heavens are concerned, *“The way of man is froward and strange”* (Prov 21:8). Further, Jeremiah well said, *“O LORD, I know that the way of man is **not** in himself: it is **not** in man that walketh to direct his steps”* (Jer 10:23).

All of this is confirmed in the text before us. The manner in which God provided for Jacob and his family does not conform to man’s way of doing things. This is not how worldly wisdom would have done it. Mere men would have had the corn in Canaan – perhaps caused a bumper crop there, so corn could have been stored there as it was in Egypt. **However, heaven’s purpose was not merely to sustain the people, but to prepare them for their inheritance.** That is still the revealed heavenly agenda.

Hearing Before the Need Arises

In this a Kingdom principle is seen. Men will not seek *“the true riches”* until they see the poverty of what the world has to offer. As long as the world is perceived as a valid resource, Divine benefits will not be sought with any fervency or consistency.

My Own Experience

I have seen some of these principles played out in my own experience. I had identified myself with a people whose vision and scope of spiritual understanding was very limited. My early ministry was among a people who spoke more about *the great commission* than about Jesus. The autonomy of the local congregation and the authority of the elders ranked higher than the gift of the Holy Spirit and everlasting consolation and good hope. Our literature rarely contained any information about an eternal inheritance, being conformed to the image of God’s Son, or the nature of the New Covenant. A virtual theological desert was created in which the nourishing fruit of justification, sanctification, a living hope, and a robust faith were rarely, if ever, pointed out. There were vast segments of Scripture that were regularly neglected. Such things as God’s eternal purpose, election, and His government over all were not the subjects of exposition. Every serious believer within this group was aware of the inward struggle of the flesh and Spirit, but I knew of no one who talked about it or understood it. Few people had any idea concerning the purging of the conscience, the strengthening of the inner

man, or Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith. These were simply not things that were subjects of preaching or exposition. Such things as Divine guidance, enablement, and sustenance were also neglected.

There was very little for the heart. Few things were said that could be pondered. As a result, things became rather monotonous. I was slowly starving to death, but did not recognize the symptoms of it. All of this was happening while I was ranked among the more zealous and informed of the group.

In the midst these experiences, I heard that there was, so to speak, corn in the Egypt of my religious world. There were certain religious persuasions that we had been told to avoid, for they were denominational in nature, and could very well overthrow our faith. And, indeed, much of this was true. **However, it was not the whole truth.** Devoting myself to the reading of spiritual men of the past, I found things that were nourishing to my soul. My faith was strengthened when I read expositions of God's absolute control over the affairs of men. My heart leaped for joy when I was made aware of the cleansing of the conscience, freedom from condemnation even though I was experiencing inward struggle, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the subduing of the flesh. When I saw that the work of the Lord is driven by the will of the Lord, and that the Lord finished what He started, hope was awakened, and comfort came to stay.

I had found corn in Egypt – in the very place I had avoided. Oh, I knew I could not stay in Egypt – just as surely as Jacob and his family could not remain there. But God had arranged for a food supply for His people that transcended their circumstances. I know it was exceedingly difficult to survive the assaults of the devil while limiting my spiritual diet to the great commission, the plan of salvation, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and church government. That was surely corn, but it was not the whole supply. So, when I heard of more food, I did like Jacob, and determined to obtain some of it. I had the same reasons Jacob had – *“that we may live and not die.”*

Like Jacob, I was not limited to

In this, we see something of the Divine manner of reviewing history. Purposes and objectives are expounded, and are not mere human experience. If the purpose of God was not being revealed in this entire scenario, it would not have been mentioned.

Egypt. My life would not be continually sustained by that means. I planted some of the corn I obtained, and eventually received a crop of my own. The seed I had received in the institution did not grow plenteous or nourishing crops. How I thank God that He got the word through to me that there was more food than what existed in my religious homeland!

HE SENT OUR FATHERS FIRST

“... he sent out our fathers first.”
Other versions read, *“he sent out fathers there the first time.”* ^{NASB} *“he sent our fathers on their first visit.”* ^{NIV} *“he sent our ancestors there on their first visit.”* ^{NRSV} *“so he sent his sons – our ancestors – to buy some.”* ^{NLT} *“So he sent our ancestors there. (This was their first trip to Egypt.”* ^{IE} *“he sent our forefathers into Egypt; that was the first time.”* ^{WEYMOUTH} *“sent our forefathers on their first visit down there.”* ^{WILLIAMS} *“he sent forth our forefathers [to go there on their] first trip.”* ^{AMPLIFIED} and *“Egypt he sent our forefathers out of their own country for the first time.”* ^{PHILLIPS}

By saying Jacob sent the fathers [his sons], *“first,”* the text means he sent them **for the first time**. It does **not** mean he sent them first, planning to go there later himself. In fact, he had no plans of moving there, or even going there. His sole purpose was to obtain food so they would not die. **However, God was at work in all of this, fulfilling the dreams that had been given to Joseph when he was seventeen** (Gen 37:5-10), providing for the small but elect nation of Israel (Gen 45:5), and orchestrating history so that a great body of people would be delivered by His high hand from Egypt (Gen 45:7). Of course, none of these things would be known if they had not been revealed by

the Lord. **Providence cannot be detected, analyzed, or diagnosed by human wisdom or logic.**

The account of this first trip is recorded in Genesis 42:3-38. It proved to be a very eventful journey, as we might expect. The following events took place at that time.

- ⇒ Ten brothers went down to Egypt, leaving Benjamin, the youngest brother, at home (Gen 42:3-4).
- ⇒ When the brothers came to buy corn in Egypt, Joseph was the governor over the land, although they did not know it. Fulfilling the dreams of Joseph, they bowed down before him (Gen 42:6).
- ⇒ Upon seeing them, Joseph recognized them, but concealed his identity from them, and spoke harshly to them, asking why they had come. The brothers did not recognize him (Gen 42:7-8).
- ⇒ Joseph, now about twenty-two years later, recalled the dreams he had. Testing them, he then charged them with being spies. When they remonstrated, saying that they had come to buy corn, and were all one man's sons, he again charged them with being spies, saying they had come to see if the land was unprotected (Gen 42:9-14).
- ⇒ Joseph then told them the only way they could preserve their lives was to bring their younger brother, Benjamin, back to Egypt. He then put them together in prison to think about all of this (Gen 42:15-17).

The Egyptian steward replied, “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.” He then brought them into Joseph’s house, gave them water, washed their feet, and fed their animals

- ⇒ On the third day, Joseph came to them and confessed he feared God. Yet, if they did not bring their younger brother to him, they would all die (Gen 42:18-20).
- ⇒ The brothers then discussed among themselves how that this had come upon them because of their treatment of Joseph when they sold him. They saw the anguish of his soul, and heard him plead with them, yet they hardened their hearts against him. Reuben then reminded them that at that time he had told them not to sin against Joseph, yet they would not listen to him. At this time, they did not recognize Joseph, and were unaware that he was understanding everything they said. Previously, he had spoken to them through an interpreter (Gen 42:21-23).
- ⇒ Joseph turned away from them and

wept. He then returned to them and took Simeon and bound him before their eyes, setting him forth as a hostage until they returned with Benjamin (Gen 42:24).

- ⇒ Joseph then commanded his servants to fill their sacks with corn, to restore to every man the money paid for the corn, and to give them extra provisions for the trip home. The remaining brothers then returned home (Gen 42:25-26).
- ⇒ When they stopped along the way home, one of them opened his sack to give his donkey some food. When he did so, he saw his money in the mouth of the sack. When he told his brothers, they all were afraid and said, “*What is this that God hath done unto us?*” (Gen 42:27-28).
- ⇒ When they arrived home, they told their father Jacob everything that had happened to them, and how the

ruler had charged them with being spies, and told them to return the next time with their younger brother. They then emptied their sacks, and discovered that “*every man’s bundle of money was in his sack.*” They were all afraid (Gen 42:29-35).

- ⇒ Jacob then erupted in a lament: “*Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.*” Reuben stepped forward and said Jacob could kill his two sons if he did not bring back Benjamin. Jacob said he would not consent to the matter for fear that Benjamin would be harmed along the way (Gen 42:36).

Stephen’s Summation

Stephen summarized all of those things with the words, “*But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first*” (Acts 7:12) – **sixteen words!** In this, we see something of the Divine manner of reviewing history. **Purposes and objectives are expounded, and are not mere human experience.** If the purpose of God was not being revealed in this entire scenario, it would not have been mentioned.

In other words, if God cannot be seen in a thing, there really is no purpose for talking about it. Such talk is like men expecting to fly by flapping their arms. If men can see this, it will revolutionize the giving of personal testimonies and reports of religious activity.

THE SECOND TRIP TO EGYPT

“^{13a} **And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren . . .**” Other versions read, “*On the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers,*” ^{NASB} “*On their second visit Joseph told his brothers who he was,*” ^{NIV} “*And the second time his brothers had a meeting with Joseph,*” ^{BEBE} “*The second time, Yosef revealed his identity to his brothers,*” ^{CJB} “*The second time, Joseph was revealed to his brothers,*” ^{CSB} “*And at the second time, Joseph was known by his brethren,*” ^{DARBY} “*And at the second*

time, Joseph was known by his brethren,” ^{DOUAY} and “*Then they went there a second time. On this visit, Joseph told his brothers who he was.*” ^{IE}

As Stephen continues, he is very precise, revealing that he had a firm grasp of the facts in the case. **We learn from this that it is essential that when we speak about Scriptural records we should have our facts straight.** Truth is never carried in bags that are filled with the holes of ignorance.

The record of this “*second*” visit is found in Genesis 43:1-45:18. The following took place at that time.

- ⇒ As the famine increased, Jacob finally consumed all of the corn they had purchased in Egypt. He then told his sons to return to Egypt and “*buy us a little food*” (Gen 43:1-2).
- ⇒ Judah then reminded Jacob that the ruler of the land of Egypt had told them to return with their younger

brother. He then said if Jacob sent Benjamin with them, they **would** go. But if he refused to send him, they would **not** go. After some extended reasoning, Judah told Jacob to send Benjamin with them, and he would be surety for him. He also said they should hurry and obtain supplies so they and their little ones could live (Gen 43:3-10).

- ⇨ Jacob consents to the arrangement, saying, *"If it must be so now, do this: take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds: and take double money*

approached the steward of Joseph's house, speaking with him at the door. They told him they had discovered their money in their sacks on the first trip, and had brought it back, together with additional money for more food. The Egyptian steward replied, *"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."* He then brought them into Joseph's house, gave them water, washed their feet, and fed their animals (Gen 43:23-24).

- ⇨ The brothers then prepared the gifts

themselves because it was considered an abomination for the Egyptians to eat *"with the Hebrews"* (Gen 43:27-32)

- ⇨ The brothers all sat in order, the firstborn being first, and the younger being last, with the men all looking at one another in astonishment. Special portions of food were then sent to the brothers, with Benjamin receiving five times more than anyone else. So they feasted and drank freely with Joseph (Gen 43:33-34).

- ⇨ Joseph then commanded the steward of the house to fill the men's sacks with food, *"as much as the could carry,"* putting *"every man's money in his sack's mouth."* Additionally, Joseph told the steward to put his own *"silver cup in the sack's mouth of the youngest,"* together with his *"corn money."* The men were then sent away early the next morning, as soon as it was light (Gen 44:1-3).

- ⇨ As soon as the men had left, Joseph called his steward and told him to follow the men. When he caught up with them, he was to say to them, *"Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good? Is not this it in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth? ye have done evil in so doing"* (Gen 44:5). The steward caught up with the brothers, did as he was told, and found the cup in Benjamin's sack. The brothers tore their clothes in grief, got on their donkeys, and returned to the city (Gen 44:4-12).

- ⇨ Upon return to Joseph's house, they found him there and fell down before him. Joseph asked, *"What deed is this that ye have done? wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?"* Judah quickly responded, asking Joseph what they could do to clear themselves. Then he confessed, *"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."* (Gen 44:15). Joseph said he could not receive them all as servants, declaring that only the one who had the cup – Benjamin – would be his

A spiritual environment in which advancement in the faith is not likely is one in which spiritual resources continue to be diminished until at last a spiritual famine takes place, and no food can be found.

in your hand: and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand: peradventure it was an oversight: Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man: and God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved" (Gen 43:11-14).

- ⇨ When the brothers arrived in Egypt and stood before Joseph, he saw Benjamin with them. He commanded the ruler of his house to bring the men to his own house, and prepare a special meal for them all. The man did so, bringing the brothers to Joseph's house (Gen 43:15-17).
- ⇨ When they all arrived, the men were all afraid, reasoning that they were being brought there because of the money that was in their sacks. They reasoned that the ruler was going to make slaves of them. They then

they had brought for presentation to Joseph, *"for they heard that they should eat bread there."* When Joseph came home, they brought their gifts to him and *"bowed themselves to him to the earth."* Joseph then asked them concerning their welfare inquiring if their father was still alive. The brothers replied that he was still alive and in good health, and then bowed down their heads and prostrated themselves before Joseph (Gen 43:26).

- ⇨ Joseph then saw his younger brother Benjamin and said to him, *"God be gracious unto thee, my son."* No longer able to contain himself, Joseph sought a place where he could weep privately. After entering his chamber and weeping, he washed his face and went out to his brothers, controlling his emotions. He then commanded them to put the food on the table. Joseph ate by himself, and his brothers ate by themselves. As well, the Egyptians ate by

servant. (Gen 44:16-17).

⇨ Judah then came close and told Joseph of how their father was an old man, and Benjamin was the child of his old age, was the last child of his mother, and that his father loved him dearly. If the lad left his father, Judah said, the father would die. He then told of Jacob's consent to let Benjamin go, asking that he be sent back to his father, and Judah become servant to Joseph (Gen 44:18-34). He pled earnestly and effectively.

⇨ It was at this point that Joseph could no longer restrain himself. He said everyone was to be removed from the room except he and his brothers. It was then that he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard him. He then told his brothers, *"I am Joseph, doth my father yet live?"* His brothers could not answer him, for they were afraid. Joseph then asked them to come close, 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 . . . And 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: and He hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt"* (Gen 45:4-8).

Stephen summed up all of those remarkable details with these words: *"And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren . . ."*—twelve words! Joseph *"was made known"* in such a manner as to remind the brothers of what they had done. The revelation also glorified God because Joseph knew what had actually happened. This was all the Lord's doing, and it was marvelous in Joseph's eyes.

It also ought to be noted that God used Joseph, not Reuben the firstborn. He did not use Judah, although he had more wisdom than most of the others. He rather used a young man who would maintain his integrity in the foreign land, and give God the glory for what was done. **This is how God chose to sustain**

His people – not by giving them everything, but by taking it from them, in order that He might sustain them.

A PRINCIPLE REVEALED

There is a Kingdom principle revealed in this text. It might be called "the principle of the second time." Joseph was made known to his brethren *"the second time"*—the second time they were exposed to him. This principle was enunciated by the Psalmist: *"God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God"* (Psa 62:11).

The second time is the truth of the saying he had heard registering upon his spirit.

⇨ Referring to this principle Peter wrote, *"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do*

calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power" (Eph 1:18-19).

⇨ It is when we are enabled to *"comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God"* (Eph 3:18-19).

⇨ This is also described as being *"filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful*

He rather used a young man who would maintain his integrity in the foreign land, and give God the glory for what was done. This is how God chose to sustain His people – not by giving them everything, but by taking it from them, in order that He might sustain them.

well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (2 Pet 1:19). The dawning of the day and the rising of the Day Star in the heart is *"the second time"* in spiritual experience. It is the time when the magnitude of the Gospel dawns upon the soul, and confidence grows into maturity.

⇨ This might also be viewed as the time when one becomes conscious of *"the witness in himself"* (1 John 5:10),

⇨ This is also when the Spirit is said to bear witness with our Spirit *"that we are the children of God"* (Rom 8:16).

⇨ From yet another perspective, this is the time when the *"eyes of our understanding"* are enlightened to *"know what is the hope of His*

in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness" (Col 1:9-11).

One of the great penalties for not growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18), is that "the second time" never occurs. Confidence never blooms in the heart, which makes retrogression inevitable. The necessity of the confidence that comes with spiritual maturity is confirmed by a most arresting word that is delivered in the book of Hebrews. *"But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end"* (Heb 3:6).

It is possible for a person to never be hungry and thirsty enough for the day to dawn. Such people expend all of their

It is possible for a person to never be hungry and thirsty enough for the day to dawn. Such people expend all of their energies on things that bring no spiritual advantage. When “the evil day” comes, and the devil assaults them with all manner of temptation, they simply collapse, because they have no spiritual power.

energies on things that bring no spiritual advantage. When “the evil day” comes, and the devil assaults them with all

manner of temptation, they simply collapse, because they have no spiritual

power. They have not been able to put on the whole armor of God, because they have lived without realizing there is such a provision. Such a state is like Jacob living in a famine without knowing there was corn in Egypt. A spiritual environment in which advancement in the faith is not likely is one in which spiritual resources continue to be diminished until at last a spiritual famine takes place, and no food can be found. That would be like Jacob depleting his supply of corn, and never finding out there was a supply in Egypt that could be obtained. The frequency of such a spiritual condition is mind-boggling.

JOSEPH'S KINDRED WERE MADE KNOWN TO PHARAOH

^{413b} . . . and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh.” Other versions read, “Joseph's family became known to the Pharaoh.” ^{NKJV} “Joseph's family was disclosed to Pharaoh.” ^{NASB} “Pharaoh learned about Joseph's family,” ^{NIV} “Joseph's race became manifest to Pharaoh,” ^{ASV} “Pharaoh had knowledge of Joseph's family,” ^{BBE} “Pharaoh came to know his origin,” ^{NJB} “and they [his brothers] were introduced to Pharaoh,” ^{NLT} “Pharaoh was informed of Joseph's parentage,” ^{WEYMOUTH} “thus Joseph's race was revealed to Pharaoh,” ^{WILLIAMS} “the family of Joseph became known to Pharaoh and his origin and race,” ^{AMPLIFIED} and “and his ancestry became plain to Pharaoh.” ^{PHILLIPS}

In order for the Israelites to be sustained in Egypt, where their appointed multiplication would take place, it was necessary that Pharaoh be favorably inclined to them. The account of Pharaoh's introduction to Joseph's brethren is recorded in Genesis.

⇒ “And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye: lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; and take your father and your households, and come unto me:

and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours” (Gen 45:16-20).

In this case, the key association was being made with Joseph, not Abraham. Ordinarily, that was not the manner in which Jacob's progeny were considered. However, at this time, a man who was respected by Pharaoh was required. According to God's purpose, he sent Joseph into Egypt to be the one Pharaoh would favor. The purpose for this was not to establish a career for Joseph, but to provide for the sustenance of the race through whom the Messiah would come.

We are catching a glimpse of the Divine manner here, and how God brings glory to himself. Self-centered men see God as supplying everything they want, making life comfortable for them, and fulfilling all of their desires. In this case, the comfort of Joseph was not the point. Rather, the maintenance of the chosen race under impossible circumstances was the point. God would raise up a nation among a people who considered them an

abomination – so much so, they would not even eat with them (Gen 43:32; 46:34).

This people would bring their flocks into Egypt, and they would be given the very best of the land – during a time of famine. The sophist would prefer that a blessing be poured out upon Canaan, and it become the best of the world. However, that did not happen until the people of God were occupying the land.

It is important to note that there is such a thing as associations that are blessed by God in order to the maintenance of His people. It is the principle of the earth helping the woman, that is declared in Revelation 12:16.

ANOTHER PRINCIPLE

In this text we see another precious principle – namely that of Jesus bringing us to the Father in order that we might obtain favor in his sight. Believers are to Jesus what Joseph's brethren were to him. They are brought to God for acceptance (1 Pet 3:18), like Joseph brought his brothers to Pharaoh for his acceptance. Because of Jesus, they receive the best of the spiritual land, like Joseph's brethren were given the best of the land of Egypt. They are also sustained by Him, and brought into the favor of God by Him.

JOSEPH CALLED FOR HIS FATHER AND ALL HIS KINDRED

¹⁴ **Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls.** Other versions read, *“Then Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and all his relatives to him, seventy-five people,”*^{NKJV} *“And Joseph sent word and invited Jacob his father and all his relatives to come to him, seventy-five persons in all,”*^{NASB} *“After this, Joseph sent for his father Jacob and his whole family, seventy-five in all,”*^{NIV} *“Then Joseph sent for Jacob his father and all his family, seventy-five persons,”*^{BBE} *“and Joseph having sent, did call for his father Jacob, and all his kindred -- with seventy and five souls,”*^{YLT} *“Then Joseph sent for his father Jacob and all his brothers' families to come to Egypt, seventy-five persons in all,”*^{LIVING} *“Then Joseph sent some men to invite Jacob, his father, to come to Egypt. He also invited all of his relatives (75 persons altogether),”*^{IE} *“Then Joseph sent and invited his father Jacob and all his family, numbering seventy-five persons, to come to him,”*^{WEYMOUTH} *“and Joseph sent an invitation calling to himself Jacob his father and all his kindred, seventy-five persons in all,”*^{AMPLIFIED} and *“Then Joseph sent and invited to come and live with him his father and all his kinsmen, seventy-five people in all.”*^{PHILLIPS}

The account of Joseph sending for his father and all his kindred is found Genesis 45:9-13. **“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: and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast: and there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine: lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty. And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.”**

At this point, Joseph speaks with the utmost confidence, **even though the land of Goshen had not yet been assigned to Israel.** It will not be until Jacob and his kindred arrive that the official assignment of the land will be made. However, as stated in Genesis 45:17-20, Pharaoh himself issued a personal invitation to the Israelites, underwriting the entire trip from Canaan to Egypt.

SEVENTY-FIVE SOULS

Stephen states that seventy-five souls came into Egypt. This appears to be a discrepancy to the sophist, for elsewhere the Scriptures clearly say there were **seventy** souls.

- ⇨ **“And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, were two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten”** (Gen 46:27).
- ⇨ **“And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls: for Joseph was in Egypt already”** (Ex 1:5).
- ⇨ **“Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons; and now the LORD thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude”** (Deut 10:22).

Stephen is quoting from the Septuagint version (Gen 46:27 and Exodus 1:5), which reads **“seventy-five”** instead of **“seventy.”** The Septuagint Version is the Hebrew Scriptures translated into Greek. **“And the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in the land of Egypt, were nine souls; all the souls of the house of Jacob who came with Joseph into Egypt, were seventy-five souls”** (Gen 46:27, LXX, ^{SEPTUAGINT}). **“But Joseph was in Egypt. And all the souls born of Jacob were seventy-five”** (Ex 1:5, LXX ^{SEPTUAGINT}). However, in the Septuagint version, the Deuteronomy text **does** read **“seventy.”** **“With seventy souls your fathers went down into Egypt; but the Lord thy God has made thee as the stars of heaven in multitude”** (Deut 10:22, LXX ^{SEPTUAGINT}). How do we account for this

difference – or is it even important that we do account for it?

1 JACOB	1 JACOB
66 SIXTY-SIX	66 SIXTY-SIX
1 JOSEPH	1 JOSEPH
2 { Ephraim	1 EPHRAIM
Manasseh	1 Shutthelah
70	1 MANASSEH
BOTH GROUPS WERE IN EGYPT AS SOJOURNERS	4 { Ashriel, Machir
	Zelophehad, Peresh
	75

There is a precise reason for the difference, and, from the perspective of Scripture, there is no contradiction in the differing numbers. **Stephen is quoting a figure that reflects the number of people for whom the distribution of Canaan was determined.** While it is a technical point, it is helpful to know the reasoning reflected in the Septuagint. The number **“seventy”** reflects the genealogy with Joseph in mind. The number **“seventy-five”** reflects it from the standpoint of Joseph’s sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.

The **“names”** of the sons of Ephraim and Manasseh are recorded in 1Chronicles 7:14-21. Their names were Ashriel, Machir, Zelophehad, Peresh, sons of Manasseh; and Shutthelah, son of Ephraim. **In the First Chronicles text, the inheritance was reckoned upon the basis of Joseph’s inheritance being doubled, and divided between the sons born to him in Egypt – Ephraim and Manasseh.** Thus, when coming to Joseph, the inheritance was reckoned from the sons begotten by his sons, rather than the ones begotten by Jacob. The extensive genealogy of this section (2 Chron 2:1-12:15) explains who inherited the land of Canaan. When recounting the offspring of Reuben, the firstborn son of Jacob, a special explanation was given. **“Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel, (for he was the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph's)”** (1 Chron 5:1-2).

The genealogy, reckoned by the strongest, commenced with Judah (1 Chron 2:3). Joseph is not mentioned as the progenitor of sons, but his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, are listed instead (7:14-21). Their sons totaled five, and are added to the seventy, accounting for Stephen's record of the people

entering into the land of Canaan. All of them dwelt in Egypt, but none of them came out of it.

Because Stephen is emphasizing the land of Israel itself, he mentions the Septuagint which gives a number reflecting the inheritance of the land rather than the direct offspring of Jacob.

While this is not a point that merits contention and extended debate, it is important to see that sound reasoning is behind it all. Skeptics are never right in questioning the integrity of Scripture, or causing men to doubt its accuracy. We owe such men absolutely no respect.

JACOB AND OUR FATHERS WENT DOWN INTO EGYPT AND DIED

“¹⁵ So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers.” Other versions read, “*And Jacob went down to Egypt and there passed away, he and our fathers,*”^{NASB} “*Then Jacob went down to Egypt, where he and our fathers died,*”^{NIV} “*so Jacob went down to Egypt. He himself died there as well as our ancestors,*”^{NRSV} “*And Jacob went down to Egypt, and came to his end there, and so did our fathers,*”^{BBE} “*Jacob went down to Egypt. He and our forefathers died there,*”^{CSB} “*So Jacob came to Egypt, where he died, and all his sons,*”^{LIVING} “*And Jacob went down into Egypt, where he himself died, as did [also] our forefathers,*”^{AMPLIFIED} and “*So Jacob came down to Egypt and both he and our fathers ended their days there.*”^{PHILLIPS}

The Scriptures record Jacob and his clan going down into Egypt, taking advantage of the wagons that Pharaoh sent for their transport. “*And Jacob rose up from Beersheba: and the sons of Israel*

*“And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, **Jacob, Jacob.** And he said, **Here am I.** And He said, **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 also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes**”* (Gen 46:2-4).

It was a glad day for Jacob, to know his son was alive and calling for him. He was skeptical at first, doubtful that he had really been told the truth. However, when he heard the report of Joseph's words and saw the evidence of blessing, his heart was refreshed. Here is how the Scriptures state the case. “*And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived*” (Gen 45:27).

I will go up, and show Pharaoh, and say unto him, My brethren, and my father's house, which were in the land of Canaan, are come unto me; and the men are shepherds, for their trade hath been to feed cattle; and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have. And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation? That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen: for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians” (Gen 46:31-34).

Having duly instructed his father and brethren, Joseph now told Pharaoh of their presence, and prepared to carry out the plan he had outlined. “*Then Joseph came and told Pharaoh, and said, My father and my brethren, and their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have, are come out of the land of Canaan; and, behold, they are in the land of Goshen. And he took some of his brethren, even five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, What is your occupation? And they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants are shepherds, both we, and also our fathers. They said moreover unto Pharaoh, For to sojourn in the land are we come; for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks: for the famine is sore in the land of Canaan: now therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen. And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee: The land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any*

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carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him” (Gen 46:5). However, before Jacob went down into Egypt, God spoke to him in visions of the night. The record of the visitation is in Genesis 46:2-4, and is a wonderful report of Divine commitment.

Once they arrived in Egypt, Joseph prompted them on what to say when Pharaoh asked about their occupation. He had already promised them the land of Goshen, now he would take measures to ensure that is where they would live. “*And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto his father's house,*

men of activity among them, then **make them rulers over my cattle**. And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and **Jacob blessed Pharaoh**. And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage. **And Jacob blessed Pharaoh**, and went out from before Pharaoh. And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in **the best of the land**,

in the land of Rameses, **as Pharaoh had commanded**" (Gen 47:1-11).

How marvelously it all concluded, for the hand of the Lord was with them, causing Pharaoh's heart to be turned toward them, and inclining him to give His people the very best of the land of Egypt. Even though God had promised Abraham, then Isaac, then Jacob, that they would inherit the land of Canaan, none of them ever did. They all sojourned in the land of promise as though it was a strange land. It is written that they dwelt in tabernacles, though they were heirs of the land (Heb 11:9). It was their progeny who would actually possess the land, and

they would do so because of the promise of God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their belief of that promise.

All of the people who came down into Egypt from Canaan died there. None of them ever returned to Canaan to dwell. Jacob died when he was 147 years old, having spent seventeen years in Egypt (Gen 47:26). Joseph commanded his physicians to embalm the body of Jacob, a process that required forty days (Gen 50:3). The Egyptians "mourned for him" seventy-five days (Gen 50:3). All of the "fathers" – his sons – died there also – outside of the promised land, without receiving any of it for their own.

THEY WERE BURIED IN THE PLOT OF LAND ABRAHAM PURCHASED

¹⁶ **And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem."**

Neither the bodies of Jacob nor his sons were left in Egypt. Joseph was buried there, but his bones were dug up and carried out with Israel when they left Egypt to go to Canaan. This was done according to his own commandment, as he held on to the promise of God (Gen 50:24-25). He was 110 years old when he died (Gen 50:26), having spent 93 years in Egypt (from 17 to 110). An exceedingly long time away from home!

AND WERE CARRIED OVER INTO SYCHEM

"And were carried over into Sychem . . ." Other versions read, "And they were carried back to Shechem,"^{NKJV} "And from there they were removed to Shechem,"^{NASB} "Their bodies were brought back to Shechem,"^{NIV} "and they were carried over unto Shechem,"^{ASV} "and their bones were later moved to Shechem,"^{NIB} "All of them were taken to Shechem,"^{LIVING} and "And their ^ybodies [Jacob's and Joseph's] were taken back to Shechem."^{AMPLIFIED}

We have some details about the burial of Jacob, and it is representative of all of the fathers of the Israelites. After the days of mourning for Jacob were

completed, Joseph went to Pharaoh and told him Jacob had left a commandment that he be buried in the land of Canaan in a grave he himself had dug. He asked for permission to bury him, and then return again to Egypt. Pharaoh consented to this, telling Joseph, "Go up and bury thy father as he made thee swear" (Gen 50:4-6). Once again, we see the Lord turning the king's heart.

When he went to bury his father, the Scriptures record that "with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, and all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house: **only their little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen**. And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen: **and it was a very great company**" (Gen 50:7-9).

AND LAID IN THE SEPULCHER THAT ABRAHAM BOUGHT

". . . and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem." Other versions read, "and laid in the tomb that Abraham bought for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem,"^{NKJV} "and laid in the tomb which Abraham had purchased for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor in Shechem,"^{NASB} "and laid in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum

of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem,"^{NRSV} "and put to rest in the place which Abraham got for a price in silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem,"^{BBE} "for burial in the tomb that Abraham purchased in Shechem from Hamor's sons,"^{GWN} and "They were placed in a grave there. (It was the same grave in Shechem that Abraham had bought from the sons of Hamor. He paid them with silver)."^{IE}

After arriving in Canaan, the multitude came to "the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan." There they mourned for Jacob for seven more days "with a great and a very sore lamentation." The mourning was so profound that when the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land, heard it, they said, "This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians: wherefore the name of it was called Abelmizraim, which is beyond Jordan" (Gen 50:11).

From that point, Jacob's sons "carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field for a possession of a buryingplace of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre" (Gen 50:13). The record of the purchase of the land is in Genesis 23:16-20. It was procured originally for the burial of Sarah (Gen 24:19) – the only part of Canaan that he owned, and he

had to buy it. Abraham was buried there later (Gen 25:9-10). It is assumed that Isaac was also buried there, for he spent his final days in Mamre, which was close at hand (Gen 25:9). Now, Jacob's sons bury him there as well.

Thus the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ended in the prospect of inhabiting the promised land. Egypt was not their home, and that is why they insisted on their bodies not remaining there. They lived and died with the

promised land in view, thereby providing us an example of the posture that is to be maintained by all who have faith. Faith roots us in another land – another world – for which we groan as long as we are remain in this vile body.

CONCLUSION

This masterful presentation of the past is intended to confirm Stephen was not guilty of the charges brought against him. No man could speak with such heart who hated the Israelites, or was intent upon disrupting their lives. In this word we find a sterling example of someone

who had a grasp of the truth, and was able to handle aright the Word of God. **The glory of God is wrapped up in Stephen's words, and His purpose is revealed in them.** The history he expounds confirms what is involved in God **causing** all things to work together

for the good of those who love Him. The effect of faith upon those who possess it is declared, as well as the power of God who gives people favor, and exalts them even while they are in a foreign land. God is greatly to be praised for the productive qualities of this passage!

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 6/1/2007. We will continue our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The Thirtieth lesson will cover verses 17 through 29 of the seventh chapter: "STEPHEN'S DEFENSE, #3." Stephen traces the Divine workings from the approach of the appointed deliverance from Egypt to the time Moses fled from Egypt. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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