

## **Trust In God's Plan**

Jeremy Weiland

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Feast of Tabernacles Sermon

We keep the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days, seven days that picture God's seven-thousand-year plan for mankind. We look forward to the millennial rule – that last one thousand years of God's Kingdom ruling over this earth. But the first six thousand years are also represented in the Feast of Tabernacles. Mankind's governments, confusion, wars – all the destructive things that we have witnessed from Satan's rule of this earth – all of these have been a necessary and vital part of God's plan.

If you were to tell that to the world though, they'll have difficulties wrapping their heads around it.

Some people even see the horrors that we have witnessed in these six thousand years of history and think that this is proof that God doesn't exist. But we understand that it has been for a purpose. This is a simple truth that we understand that most of the world has no idea about.

This is Satan's world now. God has allowed for it in order to begin molding and fashioning a small group of individuals that will become the shepherds for the rest of the world in the future.

And we know why mankind must first experience this first six thousand years. Our carnal human nature is burdened by "the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life." All of that, though, is for a reason. We have to make a choice that we want to become like God and have His ways, that His ways are the only ways that lead to peace and contentment, that Satan's way is destructive and only leaves us unhappy and unfulfilled. We have to be fully convinced of that because God wants to give us everything, as it states, and that includes everlasting life.

And we know that the mind of mankind, the mind of Satan, that it cannot exist with God in that state. He won't allow it. But that really is great news. Because we will be guaranteed not to have all the problems and the garbage that we've had in these first six thousand years that we've been witness to.

And looking around at everything that is happening in the world right now, sometimes it just seems like too much. But thankfully, we are now at the end of that six thousand years, and we know we are in the end-times. We know so much of what is going to happen, but we don't know all the exact details. We don't know how everything is going to turn out. We don't know all the timing. But we know that God has a plan. God knows what He is doing.

Do we fully believe that? Do we believe that God will do as He says He will? God will do what has to be done, and we need to be ready for whatever comes our way.

But not knowing what is to come can be stressful. We might even worry. That goes for end-time events. Maybe with our concerns and how we prepare for them. Of course, we know we need to be physically prepared, but the reality is that we can only prepare in a physical manner so much.

But just think of other things in life that stress you and worry you, because I am sure there are plenty of them. Oftentimes, it's because we are faced with some sort of trial or challenge in life.

So, what worries you? Is it family, your job, finances? Do you let it get you down? I can guarantee that all of these things have some influence and effect on us in life. But really, we should really have more peace in our lives than we do, and we can always have more.

Personally, I have been frantically trying to put this split sermon together in a relatively short period of time. I can't put these together super-fast, unfortunately, so honestly, I have been a little bit stressed trying to get this together, and I've had no idea what to speak about. But I know I have to rely on God to give me what I should give, so I started thinking about reliance on God and trusting in Him. Not only do I have to do that for putting a sermon like this together, but it's something that we should all be practicing in our lives on a daily.

We have to look to God whenever we have something to overcome in life. We shouldn't just rely on our own understanding or try to be self-reliant. As long as we don't stop obeying God, we can have the confidence that God will use us as a vessel to honor and produce something through us. God's spirit produces; there is nothing else that it can do.

Today, we are going to take a closer look at the story of Joseph of the Old Testament, whose name means "He shall add." His name comes from a word that also carries the meaning of "increasing and repeating." Names in the Bible often have so much meaning. And here we can see with Joseph that God had a plan to work out in his life. He was indeed going to make an increase through Joseph.

The title of today's split sermon is *Trust in God's Plan*.

The Feast of Tabernacles is all about God's plan for mankind, and each of the Holy Days reveal a detail of His overall plan. But it wasn't until the children of Israel were in the wilderness that God gave to them the law and the Holy Days.

We know that the plan of God comes through the Holy Days. But think of those that lived in times before the Holy Days were given, such as, you know, even Moses. Abraham, Issac, and Jacob, and from there the beginning of the tribes of Israel. What did they know of the plan of God for mankind? In reality, almost nothing compared to what we know now.

But they had a relationship with God and He worked with them. He gave them promises. And each of those patriarchs was tested. In fact, everyone that God has ever worked with is tested. Would they follow God? Would they obey God and do what God instructed of them?

Joseph, the son of Jacob, was in this boat too. He didn't have any idea of what God's full plan was. And as we'll read, he knew just a little. But it was enough to continually trust in what God was working out, even when really unimaginable things came upon him.

So, let's start off today in **Genesis 37:1**. It says, **And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.**

So, here we are introduced to Joseph, and he is only seventeen years old. He was with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, and these were the handmaids of Jacob's other wives, Leah and Rachel. And it says that Joseph brought an evil report about them to his father. We don't know anything more, but obviously, it wasn't good.

Continuing on in **verse 3—Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age, and he made him a coat of many colors.** If we remember correctly, Joseph was the eleventh son, but he was the firstborn to Rachel who was also the wife that Jacob loved the most. She is the one he wanted to marry originally but was tricked into first marrying her older sister Leah.

**Verse 4—And when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.** So, in these first few verses, we already see that Joseph is the favorite and he had a special relationship with his father. He has even told on some of his brothers for their supposed wrongdoings. So, we see that there was jealousy brewing.

**Verse 5—And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brothers, and they hated him yet more. And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed. For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and behold, your sheaves stood about and made to bow to my sheaf. And his brothers said to him, Shall you indeed reign over us? or shall you indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.**

**And he dreamed yet another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, Behold, I have dreamed another dream, and behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars bowed down to me. And he told it to his father, and to his brothers. And his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this**

**dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow down ourselves to you on the earth? And his brothers envied him, but his father observed the saying.** Or better stated, he committed it to memory.

So, we see that these dreams are acting like a salt to rub into the wounds of his brothers. He is already the favorite and now he is having these dreams that show his brothers having to bow down to him. So, you can imagine that they're like, "Oh yeah, you think you are so great, daddy's favorite and all of us are underneath you." And you can see how especially the older ones would feel about that.

And then, even Jacob when he heard about the second dream, he rebuked Joseph for it. But it says that Jacob remembered it. Maybe in the back of his mind, he thought there could be something to it. We don't know. But it says he remembered it.

**Verse 12—And his brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. And Israel... And it says, of course, the other name given to Jacob by God. And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not your brothers feed the flocks in Shechem? Come, and I will send you unto them. And he said to him, Here am I. And he said to him, Go, I pray you, see whether it be well with your brothers, and well with the flocks, and bring me word again. So, he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.**

So, Jacob sends Joseph to see what is going on with his brothers and to make sure the flocks are ok, and then to come back to him with a report.

**Verse 15—And a certain man found him, and behold, he was wandering in the field. And the man asked him, saying, What are you looking for? And he said, I seek my brothers. Tell me, I pray you, where do they feed their flocks? And the man said, They are departed hence, and I heard them say, Let's go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothan. And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him.**

So, we know from just a few verses ago that Joseph had already given a bad report to his father about some of his brothers. And now they see him coming and they're like, "Look! Great, here comes this little tattle-tale, and now is our chance to get rid of him once and for all."

And in **verse 19** it says, **And they said one to another, Behold, the dreamer comes.** So, you can tell that dream stuff really ate them up since they refer to him as "the dreamer." So, the little tattle-tale dreamer, you know, daddy's favorite is coming to check on them. I am sure some of them see him as a sort of a traitor or a spy who is working for their father and looking to report back to Jacob anything that would displease him.

And **verse 20** says, **Come now, therefore, let us slay him and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast has devoured him. And we shall see what becomes of his dreams.** So, in other

words, you know, “We’ll show him. Him and his stupid dreams.” So, you can tell they are really eaten up just in these few comments. Plus, the fact that they are talking about killing him. I mean, if you are plotting to kill him, then that level of hate has to be through the roof.

**Verse 21—And Reuben heard it and delivered him out of their hands and said, Let us not kill him. And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into the 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.**

So, if you remember, they are in this place called Dothan, which means “two wells”. So presumably, one of these wells is the place they are talking about throwing Joseph into. But notice Reuben, the firstborn, he doesn’t want to kill him. He is already on real shaky ground with his father, Jacob. Just a few chapters back in Genesis it records the account of Reuben sleeping with Bilhah, the concubine to Jacob and the handmaid of Rachel.

So, it would be safe to assume that he is in the doghouse right now and so, killing Joseph would also be risky for him, and especially if anything came back to him. And being the firstborn, probably have more responsibility there. So, he says basically, “Look, let’s put him in this pit, let’s take him out later and we’ll take him back to his father.”

**And then verse 23—And it came to pass when Joseph had come unto his brothers, that they stripped Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colors that was on him, and they took him, and they cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty, there was no water in it.**

**And they sat down to eat bread. And they lifted up their eyes and looked, and behold, a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spices and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. And Judah said unto his brothers, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brothers were content.**

So, now they finally have agreed that they’re not going to kill him. Killing him is way too much. But selling him into slavery, well, that’s okay.

**Verse 28—Then there passed by Midianites, merchants, and they drew and lifted Joseph out of the pit and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they brought Joseph into Egypt.**

**And Reuben returned unto the pit, and behold, Joseph was not in the pit. And he rent his clothes. And he returned unto his brothers, and said, The child is not; and I, where shall I go?** If we remember, Reuben here was already wanting to return Joseph to his father. He didn’t want any trouble. And we see his response when he sees the reality of what has occurred. Joseph is gone. And it sinks in for him for

what this actually means. And he asks, “Where shall I go?” In other words, “How am I going to return back to our father, Jacob, without his beloved son?”

And then we see in the following verses that the brothers proceeded to kill a goat and dip Joseph’s coat in it. That way they can give it to their father and relinquish themselves of any wrongdoing. They present it to Jacob when they return and Jacob says, “It must have been a wild beast that killed Joseph.” And then Jacob also rips his clothes, puts on sackcloth, and mourns. And he can’t be consoled by his sons. And in **verse 35** he says that **he will go down into the grave unto my son mourning.**

So, let’s skip now over to **Genesis 39:1**. It says, **And Joseph was brought down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him off the hands of the Ishmaelites, which had brought him down there. And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. And his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made all that he did prosper in his hand.**

Just think, this 17-year-old guy was hated so much by his own family that they plotted to kill him. And at the last moment, they decided instead to sell him into slavery. Now, lots of families out there have a lot of drama, and there’s many of you, I’m sure, probably have some drama in your own family with siblings and parents. But probably, they haven’t plotted to kill you. Maybe they would have sold you into slavery though if they thought they had a willing buyer. But really, what Joseph... I say that jokingly, you know, but really, Joseph, what he experienced here must have been incredibly traumatic.

Just put yourself in Joseph’s shoes. What would your reaction be? I think for most people, they would be quite negative. And that’s totally understandable. But we can already see with Joseph that his reaction was different. He kept going and looking to God. We know that because it says that God was with him and made him prosperous in everything that he did.

God is not with those who disobey him, for example, so after all that happened, it is safe to say that Joseph was trusting heavily on God. He was a slave, the lowest of all, and by trusting that God had Joseph’s best interests in mind, he persevered. So much so, in fact, that Potiphar noticed that everything that Joseph did he had success in. God was already making true on Joseph's name by giving that increase here.

Let’s read the next verse, **verse 4—And Joseph found grace in his sight, speaking of Potiphar, and he served him. And he made him overseer over his house, and over all that he had put into his hand. 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.**

So, incredible to think that God would bless the house of an Egyptian solely due to the obedience and trust that Joseph had in God. But God does things like that a lot. Sometimes He blesses a family or a business because of someone in particular that He is working with. And because of their obedience and trust, He can make them prosper and those around them often get to share in the increase. Those around us might not believe in God, or maybe they believe in a different god, but often they see something in us just like Potiphar saw here in Joseph.

Continuing in **verse 6** it says, **And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he knew not anything he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favored.** Potiphar lifted up Joseph into the highest position in his house. He left all that he had in Joseph's hand, as it says. Of course, that's a lot of responsibility and trust.

**Verse 7—And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. But he refused and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master knows not what is with me in the house and has committed all that he has to my hand. There is none greater in the house than I. Neither has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?**

So, Potiphar's wife here wants Joseph to lie with her. And not only does Joseph refuse but notice what he asks her. He says, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" We can see where Joseph's mind is here. All sin is against God if we understand it, and Joseph saw that. Of course, lying with Potiphar's wife would be a sin, but think of how else he would be sinning against God by doing this.

God is working out something in Joseph's life here. He brought him up from being a lowly slave to now having complete control over Potiphar's house. He has made everything that Joseph touched to prosper. If Joseph were to lie with Potiphar's wife, he would be destroying all that God had done in him. All that growth would vanish. What a shame and disgrace that would be. That's a real sin. It's much bigger than just the physical act described here.

So yes, lying with her would be very wicked indeed, but it would also be very much a sin against God if we understand it more fully. When we sin against God, we are cutting off His spirit working in us. We cut off growth. That is against what God wants for mankind.

Let's continue in **verse 10—And it came to pass as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie with her or to be with her.** So, she doesn't leave him alone, she just keeps after him.

**Verse 11—And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within. And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me. And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and got him out.**

**And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth that she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he has brought in a Hebrew unto us to mock us. He came in to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice. And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me and fled, and got him out.**

So, we see she doesn't get her way with Joseph, and she tries to flip the script and frame him for something he didn't do. And for the second time, Joseph's garment gets left behind. In the next verses, we see that this story is repeated to Potiphar once he returns home.

Let's pick back up here in **verse 19—And it came to pass when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spoke unto him, saying, After this manner did your servant to me; that his wrath was kindled. 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.** So now for a second time, Joseph finds himself in a horrible situation. Again, to no fault of his own. He was innocent. And he was taken from being the favorite and having favor, to being cast down.

Let's look at the next verse, **verse 21—But the LORD was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it prosper.**

Again, Joseph is brought down, and this time he is in a prison. He is lucky actually he wasn't put to death, so he is still being shown favor by God. And because of that, because he is being shown favor he has also been shown favor by the keeper of the prison. A second time now, Joseph's overseer trusts him so much that he doesn't even pay any attention to what Joseph is doing – it is a one hundred percent level of trust here.

It is tough to imagine the mindset that Joseph must have had here. I think most of us would be so depressed and be like "Woe is me. I can't believe this has happened." But you know, this was totally unjust, so it's understandable. And Joseph really is a victim, but it's apparent that he is not taking it like that, he's not seeing himself as a victim. Again, he's living up to the meaning of his name, and he will have increase. God was with him, and He made everything that he did to prosper.

Next, we come to Chapter 40, and we see that Pharaoh's baker and chief butler did something to get them thrown into the prison where Joseph was held. And we read that Joseph was charged with taking care of them as the prison ward.



Let's pick up in **Genesis 40:5—And they**, speaking of the butler and the chef, **dreamed a dream both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which were bound in the prison.**

**And Joseph came in unto them in the morning and looked upon them, and behold, they were sad. And he asked Pharaoh's officers that were with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Why do you look so sad today? And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me them, I pray you.**

So, the Egyptians were really into dreams and interpreting them. It was part of their culture, and they considered them to be oracles. They even had manuscripts that they would use that would help them (supposedly), you know, in interpreting the meanings of their dreams. And here we see here that Joseph is not interested in interpreting a dream and taking the credit to himself. He asks them, "Don't the interpretations of dreams belong to God." In other words, man alone cannot know what the dream means, if anything at all.

So, the first one tells Joseph his dream, and then in verse 12 we hear the interpretation. **Verse 12—And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days. Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up your head, and restore you unto your place, and you shall deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when you were his butler. But think on me when it shall be well with you, and show kindness, I pray you, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house. For indeed, I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the pit.**

It's interesting here that this word for pit or cistern, it's the same word that was used for the place where Joseph was put by his brothers in Dothan. In these times, it was common to use cisterns that didn't have any water in them as prisons. So, we can see that this account is probably a little bit of déjà vu for Joseph. And then after telling the butler that he is going to be freed in three days, he asks him to remember him and mention him to Pharaoh in hopes of being freed himself.

I'll just summarize the next few verses continuing on here, but after hearing the interpretation the baker asks him for an interpretation for his dream as well. However, Joseph informs him that instead of being freed in three days, he will be hanged in three days. And then it says that after three days, the chef was indeed hanged, and the butler was freed. However, the butler forgets about Joseph, and he makes no mention of him to Pharaoh.

That is until two years later when Pharaoh himself dreams two dreams. And he summons all of his magicians to tell him the meaning of it and none of them can tell him. And that's when the butler finally

speaks up and tells Pharaoh about Joseph. So, we know the details of the dreams from Pharaoh, and you can read it on your own, if you like. It's in more detail in Chapter 41. But for the sake of time, I will keep summarizing here to keep it going.

We know that Joseph told Pharaoh that the dream meant that there was going to be seven years of prosperous time for growing food, followed by seven years of famine. And he tells Pharaoh to appoint an overseer so that they can store enough food during the first seven years to last them during the famine that was to follow.

So, let's pick back up here in **Genesis 41:38—And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom the spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God has showed you all this, there is none so discreet** – or better stated, none who is so discerning, as in having perception and understanding. So, **there is none so discerning and wise as you.**

So, it's interesting here that even in Pharaoh's statement, he isn't praising Joseph by himself. It's really God he is praising. He sees that God is working through Joseph, but he understands that that power is coming from God. And that is a testament to how Joseph lived his life. He never took anything to himself, and God was always his focus. Even when he was a slave and a prisoner, he never lost perspective and trusted that God knew what was best for him.

Then we come to **verse 40** here, and Pharaoh continues: **You shall be over my house, and according unto your word shall all my people be ruled, Only in the throne will I be greater than you. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck.**

So, what an incredible story. From slave to overseer of a house, then to prisoner, and now finally to ruler over Egypt. This was all a part of God's plan. If God's plan was that Joseph was to be set in such a place of power, how else could it have been done? With God, I am sure it could have been done another way. But this is the way He accomplished it, and perhaps the most unexpected way.

God kept moving Joseph from place to place so that he was in the right place at the right time. But when Joseph was in those places, it probably wasn't so easy to see what the outcome would be.

And that's often how it is for us. So often, we don't know why something happens in our lives when it happens. It is only after looking back that we can begin to understand. And oftentimes, the difficulties that we go through can only be learned by those places where God puts us and the circumstances that we find ourselves in.

When God has something to accomplish through us, we must have the mindset of Joseph and rely fully on God, and actually trust in Him. In this case, God was going to cause Joseph to prosper as long as Joseph continued to allow himself to be the vessel that God could work through. And that comes from obedience plus trusting and relying on Him.

Let's drop down to **verse 50—And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of the famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah the priest of On bare unto him. And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh. For God, he said, has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house.** We see here again the importance of names. Manasseh, the name given to his firstborn, a name that was about forgetting his toil, his labor, and hardship that he had to endure. And also to forget what happened with his family after being sold into slavery.

That makes me think of when my dad has made comments in the past about the time that he spent in the camp and how he almost doesn't remember it anymore. That happens a lot in life. We forget about the hardship and just remember the good things that came from it.

It also makes me think of that verse in **Revelation 21:4** where it states—**And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.** That, of course, is talking about a much later time in God's plan for mankind, but God allows us to have some of that solace to a lesser extent in this life as well.

Let's go back to **Genesis 41:52**, the next one there. **And the name of the second he called Ephraim. For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.** So, another name with meaning. Even in the land that was not his own, where he was very much afflicted and had to battle, God caused him to be fruitful. He was fruitful as a slave and fruitful as a prisoner. Those are two conditions where most would not think it's possible to be fruitful. But he was. And now, as ruler of Egypt. He couldn't really get any more fruitful in terms of physical wealth.

Moving on in the story flow, we come to **Genesis 42:2—And he said**, this is Jacob speaking, **Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Get you down there and buy for us from there, that we may live, and not die.** So, that is the reality now in Canaan. There was widespread famine, and they had nothing more to eat. It was really a matter of life and death for Joseph's family.

And so, we see the sons are all sent down to Egypt to buy grain. The exception to that, of course, was Benjamin, the youngest and only full brother of Joseph. Jacob took special care of him and was afraid of anything happening to him like what had happened to Joseph - or what he thought had happened to Joseph.

Let's look at **verse 6—And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth.**

Skip to **verse 9—And Joseph remembered the dreams which he had dreamed of them.** Imagine how incredible this must have been. Having gone through what he did and now finally seeing his brothers, and then to see the fulfillment of his dream about them bowing down before him.

And then, the next part of the verse we see that Joseph begins to test his brothers. And this continues until he finally reveals himself to them. Joseph wants to see what his brothers have become. Are they still evil like before when they threw him into the pit? And are they all equally to blame?

Imagine all those years thinking about the betrayal. Wouldn't you want to know who had the idea to put you into the pit? He had a lot of brothers after all. He must have had better relations with some than with others. And considering that there were twelve brothers in total, they came from four different mothers, two of whom were handmaids, well, you can imagine the type of drama that that could create in a family!

You don't think he thought that surely this brother or another one would have possibly stuck up for him? I mean, to sell someone into slavery, that is not a small thing. It is a complicated situation. But was there a ringleader of the group or a few prime conspirators? And Joseph must have a lot of unanswered questions when it comes to his family and what happened that day in Dothan. So, in the next part of verse 9 he says **You are spies; to see the nakedness of the land you are come.**

He continues in **verse 15** and says—**Hereby you shall be proved (tested). By the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go forth from here except your youngest brother come here.** So, Joseph is saying, "You know, if your story is true, bring back your youngest brother, and then you won't die."

**Verse 21—And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, or asked for mercy, and we would not hear. Therefore, is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, Did I not speak unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child, and you would not hear? Therefore, behold, all of his blood is required.**

So, the brothers are discussing amongst themselves, and they have no idea that Joseph can understand them because Joseph was speaking Egyptian through an interpreter. And so, Joseph is able to learn more about what happened that day. It's clear that Reuben didn't want anything bad to happen to Joseph, and we know that when Joseph heard this that he had to leave to weep.

So, he returns, and he orders that Simeon, the second born, be held essentially as a hostage there, as a servant, as a slave until they returned with Benjamin.

I don't have time to go into all the details of the story, but to summarize, the brothers go back to Canaan but on the way they find that their money was in their sacks of grain. So, they are really afraid to return to Egypt now because, yeah, it looks like they've perhaps stolen the money then. But they do return with Benjamin after all the grain from this first trip is eaten. And once in Egypt, Joseph invites them to eat in his house, but as is the custom, they eat separately from the Egyptians

The brothers, of course, are all super stressed because of the money that was in their sacks from before, and they are all afraid of what is going to happen to them. They don't know if they're going to be put to death or what's going to happen. So, Joseph is looking at this and probably thinking, "How are they going to react?"

Let's go to **Genesis 43** now and read **verse 33—And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth. And the men marveled one at another.** So, this must have really freaked them out. They come in here, they sit down to have this meal, and they're all set according to their age. And how could anyone have known what their ages were? And I've read that this is something like a 1 in 40 million chance for them to be sat like this, to happen naturally.

And then another test for the brothers in **verse 34—And he took and sent messes unto them from before him. But Benjamin's mess was five times so much as theirs. And they drank and were merry with him.** "Messes" spoken here are basically their portions of food. And it says that Benjamin was given five times as much as the others. So, Joseph was testing them to see, you know, how would they treat his full brother from their mother Rachel. Benjamin was now the one who had the special relationship and treatment from their father, Jacob, so would the brothers be jealous and evil to Benjamin like they were to Joseph previously?

And so, it seems they passed that test, and it says that they drank and were merry with Benjamin. The fact that he had all this food more didn't seem to bother them at all.

Afterwards, Joseph allows all the brothers to leave, but this time, not only does he put the money in their sacks, but he also puts a special cup into Benjamin's. And then he has some Egyptian men follow the brothers and they catch them with the money and cup. And the brothers say, "Hey, we didn't take the cup, and if you were to find the cup in any of our sacks, then that person should be put to death". And well, to their surprise, the Egyptians find the cup in Benjamin's sack. And then they are gathered up and brought back again before Joseph in Egypt.

So again, how will the brothers react? Another test. Let's pick back up in **Genesis 44:16—And Judah said**, speaking now to Joseph, **What shall we say unto my lord? What shall we speak? or how**

**shall we clear ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants. Behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found.**

So, considering how the brothers spoke the first time together when they were accused of being spies, it's safe to say that they had been living with a guilty conscience from what they had done to Joseph. And here Judah is showing that even though they might not be guilty in this instance, they they were indeed guilty of a sin that was far greater for what they had done to Joseph previously.

Joseph responds in the next verse by saying that Benjamin should be his servant or slave, and he tells them to leave. And then in verse 20, we see Judah's plea to Joseph that he spares Benjamin. Let's read that in **verse 20—And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loves him.**

Now Judah is showing concern for his father. The brothers didn't think too much before about their father when they plotted against Joseph. But they did live with the aftermath of their actions, and they witnessed their father's grief and anguish – all of which they had been the cause of. And now Judah is showing how much he is concerned about Benjamin, not just because he is his brother, but also for their father's sake.

**Verse 30—Now therefore when I come to your servant my father, and the lad not be with us, seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life it shall come to pass, when he sees that the lad is not with us, that he will die. And your servants shall bring down the gray hairs of your servant our father with sorrow to the grave. For your servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto you, then I shall bear the blame to my father forever. Now therefore, I pray you, let your servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers. For how shall I go to my father, and the lad not be with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.**

So, what a change in attitude we see here. Judah is essentially offering up his life in return for his brother Benjamin. And it's not just for his brother, but it's also for his father. Just think about all of this drama this family has been witness to. God tested them all to see what they would do and to find out where their heart was. God had a plan to multiply the promises that he made to Abraham, Issac, and Jacob, and then He put them to the test.

**1 Chronicles 5:2** it states (you don't need to turn there)—**For Judah prevailed above his brothers, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph's.**

So, we know that the first three sons of Israel were completely skipped because of their disobedience. They didn't pass the test. It was Judah who stepped up finally and because of that God blessed him with

the scepter. And we know he ultimately blessed Joseph through Ephraim and Manasseh with the birthright.

I don't have time to go into all that, but we know that is covered in Herbert Armstrong's book, *The US and British Commonwealth in Prophecy*. If you haven't read it, you should, and if you have, it's always good to go back and brush up on it.

Let's go over now to **Genesis 45:1—Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood before him, and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept aloud. And the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brothers, I am Joseph! Does my father still live? And his brothers could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brothers, Come. Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt.**

Notice what he tells them here in **verse 5—Now, therefore, be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me here, for God did send me before you to preserve life.** Joseph recognized what this was all about. He understood the dream that he had when he was younger. He understood that all the hardship was for a purpose and a plan that God was working out. Because if he hadn't ended up in that pit in Canaan, he wouldn't have ever made it to the position he was in to be able to save the lives of his entire family.

And if we look at it from a much bigger perspective, this was the foundation for God's plan for mankind. If this family never made it to Egypt, they would have never been able to multiply like they did. In **Genesis 46:3**, God tells Jacob, **Fear not to go down to Egypt; for I will make you a great nation.** God provided for them by sending them to Egypt.

And then to think, as a people when they were eventually enslaved by the Egyptians, God provided for them a physical Passover and a way out of slavery. And you could keep going on and on. Because without that physical Passover, we couldn't have Christ and be speaking about the Feast of Tabernacles and all that it pictures for the salvation of mankind.

Let's read another verse there in **Genesis 45:7—Joseph says to his brothers, And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity.** And this word "posterity" is usually translated in other areas as "remnant." So, it says, **God sent me before you to preserve you a remnant in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.**

That is what is being worked out now in the Church. God's Church not only is a remnant in the world, but we're also a remnant of what we were formerly, a very small group of people. The 144,000, although a large number of individuals, is not that big when you consider the population of the world now and

throughout history. But this small group has been called to go through challenges and overcome just as Joseph had to. All for the purpose of helping to give salvation to the next group by a way of a great deliverance.

As we have read, Joseph faced immense challenges—betrayal, slavery, false accusations, and imprisonment. And there is no indication that he had a heart that was seeking revenge, because he understood God’s plan and purpose. He probably could have had Potiphar’s wife killed for her false accusations. He probably could have had the butler sent to prison for not saying anything in those two years.

He could have done whatever he wanted to harm his brothers. In fact, his brothers were still afraid of retribution even after Jacob died. But later on I Genesis here we see that Joseph’s response to them was **You thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive.**

Throughout it all, Joseph continued to trust in God’s plan, even when his circumstances seemed bleak. His story highlights the fact that God is ultimately in control and can use even the worst situations for good.

We may not see our lives in the same manner as Joseph’s. There probably won’t be any of us that will be elevated to the position of prime minister or oversee the wealth of an entire nation. But nonetheless, God is working out a plan in the lives of those He has called, and we will be tested so that God can know what we will do in any kind of hardship.

Just like Joseph, we too have been sent ahead of all those on the earth. We are the first to be prepared so that in the future we can help save lives by way of a great deliverance. But how much more so with us now, than in the physical manner as was done with Joseph?

So, let’s remember to keep relying on God and trusting in whatever He is working out in our lives. Be a vessel to honor and let God give the increase that He wants to give.