

# Humbling Ourselves under God's Hand

***“Humble  
yourselves under  
the mighty hand of  
God, so that at the  
proper time he may  
exalt you.”***

***—I Peter 5:6,  
International  
Standard Version***

## **THE HISTORICAL ACCOUNT**

of Joseph's life is recorded in the book of Genesis, chapters 37-50, and contains valuable lessons of humility, faith, and trust in the Lord. When he was seventeen years old, his brothers hated him “so much that they were unable to speak politely to him,” because their father loved Joseph more than them. (Gen. 37:2-4, *ISV*) Joseph then had two dreams, which he in turn related to his family. His brothers saw in these dreams a suggestion that Joseph would one day be ruler over them. Consequently, they “hated him even more.” However, his father Jacob “kept thinking about all of this.”—vss. 5-11, *ISV*

The Scriptures declare, “Jealousy is cruel as the grave.” (Song of Sol. 8:6) True to this statement, Joseph's brothers sold him to a group of Ishmaelites,

who in turn delivered him as a slave to Egypt. (Gen. 37:12-28) “But the LORD was with Joseph.” (Gen. 39:2,21; Acts 7:9,10) God’s providences continued with him, even during several harsh experiences over the course of several years. While Joseph was a slave in Egypt, his master’s wife falsely accused him. Joseph was then thrown into prison, and his “feet they hurt with fetters,” because “he was laid in iron.”—Gen. 39:20; Ps. 105:17,18

The several years of being wrongly imprisoned in Egypt brought to Joseph a rich experience of developing humility, patience, sympathy for others, and trust in the Lord. The psalmist describes this period of Joseph’s life: “The word of the LORD tried [refined] him.” (Ps. 105:19) Our Heavenly Father’s wisdom foresaw that Joseph’s character should be developed and his faith tested, thus training him for a future great work.

## **TRUSTING IN THE LORD**

Although Joseph trusted the Lord, this did not hinder him from appealing to Pharaoh’s butler, who also was in prison. After Joseph had interpreted favorably the butler’s dream, he asked him, after he would be restored as the king’s butler, to speak to Pharaoh to secure his liberty. (Gen. 40:9-15) After being freed from prison the butler certainly would have had many opportunities to repay Joseph for the kindness he had shown to him while in prison. However, he “forgot” about Joseph for two years. (Gen. 40:23; 41:1) Nevertheless, Joseph maintained his trust in the Lord and with humility, waited patiently for the outworking of God’s plans. What a wonderful lesson this is for each of the Lord’s followers at the present time!

Similar to what happened with Joseph, all of our interests are in the Lord's hands, if we have presented ourselves to him wholly, unreservedly, and have been accepted as members of the body of Christ. Along these lines Jesus admonishes us, "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of," and "The Father himself loveth you." Concerning his disciples Jesus further declared, "No man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."—Matt. 6:8; John 16:27; 10:29

We should also continually remind ourselves of the Apostle Paul's admonition: "No temptation has overtaken you that is unusual for human beings. But God is faithful, and he will not allow you to be tempted beyond your strength. Instead, along with the temptation he will also provide a way out, so that you may be able to endure it."—I Cor. 10:13, *ISV*

It is proper for us to make use of any and every reasonable means for the securing of what we consider to be for our best spiritual interests. However, we are not to rely exclusively upon our efforts, but rather to trust in the Lord, and wait patiently for his time and his way for our deliverance from every evil condition, always in accordance with his will.—Lam. 3:25,26

## **WAIT PATIENTLY FOR HIM**

The Lord's time and method for delivering Joseph from prison greatly exceeded all of his expectations. In a most remarkable way, Joseph was eventually taken out of prison and put into the palace of Egypt, the greatest nation at that time.

One day, the Pharaoh of Egypt had two dreams which impressed his mind deeply. In the first dream he saw "seven healthy, plump cows" come up out of

the River Nile and begin feeding on the bank. After that seven lean cows came up out of the river, and they devoured the seven healthy ones.—Gen. 41:1-4, *ISV*

In his second dream, the king saw “seven ears of plump, fruit-filled grain” which had grown up “on a single stalk,” indicating a most prolific yield. Then, came up “seven thin ears of grain that had been scorched by an east wind,” and they “ate up the seven plump, fruit-filled ears.” The next morning Pharaoh was greatly troubled and called for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt to explain his dreams, “but no one could interpret them.”—vss. 5-8, *ISV*

## **HUMILITY**

The butler then remembered his own dream and how accurately it had been interpreted by a kind and sympathizing young Hebrew, who was a servant to the captain of the prison. When Pharaoh heard about the accurate interpretation of the dreams of his butler, he ordered to have Joseph brought out of prison and brought before him. Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard ... that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it.”—Gen. 41:9-15

Here was a test of Joseph’s character. Would he boast about having such an ability? Joseph humbly replied, “It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer.” (vs. 16) Here was one of the lovely aspects of Joseph’s character—humility. He gave God all the honor and glory.

The Scriptures repeatedly emphasize the importance of humility. Jesus stated, “Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the person who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 14:11, *ISV*) In

the verse just prior to our opening text, the Apostle Peter writes, “God opposes the arrogant, but gives grace to the humble.” (I Pet. 5:5, *ISV*) In the Proverbs we are also admonished: “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”—Prov. 3:5,6

Concerning the importance of humility the Prophet Jeremiah wrote, “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.”—Jer. 9:23,24

While such an acknowledgment of the Lord is proper in all our experiences in life, it is especially appropriate as we study the Word of God and when we have an opportunity to share it with others. We should not speak as if it were our lesson, nor attribute the wisdom to ourselves. Rather, with our heart full of gratitude to the Lord for blessings received, let us acknowledge him, his Word, and his arrangements in connection with his Truth.—I Cor. 14:36,37; 4:7

## **INTERPRETATION AND A SUGGESTION**

After Pharaoh related both his dreams, Joseph promptly gave the interpretation. “Pharaoh’s dreams are identical,” Joseph replied. “God has told Pharaoh what he is getting ready to do. The seven healthy cows represent seven years, as do the seven healthy ears.” The “seven gaunt cows” and the “seven gaunt ears” indicate that “there will be seven years of famine.”

(Gen. 41:25-27, *ISV*) Joseph explained, “Since Pharaoh had that dream twice, it means that this event has been scheduled by God, and God will bring it to pass very soon.”—vs. 32, *ISV*

A more self-centered person than Joseph would have felt that they had done a wonderful thing by interpreting the dreams, which the wise men of Egypt could not do. Some might have been so overwhelmed with a sense of their own self-importance that they would have gladly accepted to be admired as being wise. However, Joseph’s humility is shown by giving the Lord all the credit in interpreting the two dreams. He did not feel a sense of pride when he had delivered the Lord’s message.

Joseph then suggested to Pharaoh what might be the proper steps to take, so that the dreams might prove to be a blessing. “Let Pharaoh select a wise, discerning person to place in charge over the land of Egypt. Also, let Pharaoh immediately proceed to appoint supervisors over the land of Egypt, who will collect one fifth of its agricultural production during the coming seven years of abundance. Let them collect all the food during the coming fruitful years, store up the grain in cities governed by Pharaoh’s authority, and place it under guard. Let the food be kept in reserve to feed the land for the seven years of famine that will occur throughout Egypt, so the people don’t die during the famine. What Joseph proposed pleased Pharaoh and all of his advisors.”—Gen. 41:33-37, *ISV*

We cannot suppose that Joseph had even the slightest expectation that he would be the one that Pharaoh would appoint to this work. It would be highly unlikely to expect Pharaoh to take out of his

prison a man of foreign birth and exalt him to be above all the other officers in his empire. Yet this is just what Pharaoh did!

### **“CAN WE FIND ANYONE ELSE LIKE THIS?”**

“Pharaoh asked his servants, Can we find anyone else like this—someone in whom the Spirit of God lives?” Not waiting to have the consent of the officers of his court, the king answered his own question and said to Joseph, “Since God has revealed all of this to you, ... there is no one so wise and discerning as you. So you are to be appointed in charge over my palace, and all of my people are to do whatever you command them to do. Only the throne will have greater authority than you.” Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I’ve put you in charge of the entire land of Egypt!”—Gen. 41:38-41, *ISV*

The exaltation of Joseph from having been a slave cast into prison, to now being appointed as the second highest person of power in the Egyptian empire, suggests to us a picture or image of an even higher fulfillment. The Apostle Paul explains how our Lord Jesus “stripped Himself of His glory, and took on Him the nature of a bondservant [Greek: slave] by becoming a man. ... He humbled Himself and even stooped to die; yes, to die on a cross.” (Phil. 2:7,8, *Weymouth New Testament*) Thus Jesus entered into the great prison house of death.

The experiences of Jesus, under God’s providences, tested and proved his faithfulness and prepared him for his great future work of blessing all mankind. As Joseph saved the lives of the people of Egypt, so too the greater Joseph, our Lord Jesus, will provide life to all mankind.

## **“UNTO HIM EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW”**

When the time came for Pharaoh to introduce Joseph to the Egyptian people, he first “took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph’s hand.” In those days the king’s ring indicated his authority. Then Pharaoh “arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck,” to indicate Joseph’s rank. Next, he made Joseph “to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee,” and all the people humbly acknowledged him as the king’s representative.—Gen. 41:42,43

This reminds us of the Apostle Paul’s words respecting our Lord Jesus and his high exaltation after he willingly gave his life in sacrifice, dying upon the cross. “It is in consequence of this that God has also so highly exalted Him, and has conferred on Him the Name which is supreme above every other, in order that in the Name of JESUS every knee should bow, of beings in Heaven, of those on the earth, ... and that every tongue should confess that JESUS CHRIST is LORD, to the glory of God the Father.”—Phil. 2:9-11, *WNT*

As we think about the high exaltation of Jesus, let us also remember that his “bride” is promised to be “joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” (Rom. 8:17) The privilege of becoming members of this bride class belongs to the “called, and chosen, and faithful,” whose faith is being developed and “tested” during the present Gospel Age.—Rev. 17:14; I Peter 1:7, *ISV*

Having this in our mind continually, let us consider what manner of persons we should be “in all

holy living and godly conduct.” (II Pet. 3:11, WNT) How trifling all earthly pleasures and sorrows, all earthly riches and poverty, all human weakness and debasement should seem to us! What desire we should have to make our “calling and election sure” by being “faithful unto death.”—II Pet. 1:10; Rev. 2:10

## THE “BREAD OF LIFE”

Pharaoh then gave Joseph a new name, Zaphnath-paaneah. (Gen. 41:45) A footnote in the *Companion Bible* indicates that this word means, “abundance of life or food for the living.” So too, Jesus said of himself, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven. . . . The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”—John 6:51

The Apostle Paul states that the man Christ Jesus “gave himself a ransom [Greek: corresponding price] for all, to be testified in due time.” (I Tim. 2:5,6) Elsewhere Paul says, “We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”—Heb. 2:9

Jesus is the “bread of life,” by which the whole world may be saved eventually from Adamic death, if they will “eat of this bread.” (John 6:51) In the Messianic kingdom all people will have the opportunity to eat of the “bread of life,” Jesus. In consuming this symbolic bread, mankind will first recognize and appreciate the sinless ransom sacrifice which Jesus gave. Then, each one will need to develop a personal faith in the fact that Jesus offered himself as “a ransom for all,” and to learn God’s principles of righteousness.—I Tim. 2:5,6

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*(Continued from page 30)* It will be necessary also that all come to recognize and accept the sacrifice of Jesus' perfect human life as satisfying God's justice for the disobedience of the perfect man Adam. Finally, each individual must appropriate and internalize into his heart and character the Word of God, including all the lessons, standards, and righteous principles contained therein.

The education, guidance, and discipline of mankind in God's kingdom, which will soon be established upon the earth, will be administered by the great King and Priest himself, Christ Jesus. Serving with Jesus will be his heavenly Bride, made of those "that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God." They will reign with Christ and will "be priests of God and of Christ," for the purpose of bringing as many of mankind who will be willing, back into harmony and obedience to God.—Rev. 20:4-6; II Pet. 3:9; Ps. 37:9

## **HATED WITHOUT A CAUSE**

We see many events in Joseph's life fulfilled in the life of Jesus. Both were hated without a cause. We read in Psalm 69:4, "They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head." Jesus quoted this statement and applied it to himself, saying, "They hated me without a cause."—John 15:25

Both were envied and despised by their brethren. The Jewish religious leaders condemned Jesus. They did this because his works were good, while theirs were not; because he taught the way of God more perfectly than they; and because he declared that the time would come when they and all others would recognize him as the Messiah.

The severe and trying experiences of Joseph, including his humiliation, prepared the way for his eventual glory and honor by Pharaoh, as the second highest on the throne of Egypt, and eventually to save all his brethren. So too with Jesus. He “humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,” thereby providing the ransom sacrifice which redeemed all of mankind.—Phil. 2:8

## **LEARNING OBEDIENCE**

Jesus’ humility enabled him to render perfect obedience to his Heavenly Father, demonstrating his utmost loyalty to God. Concerning Jesus we read that he learned “obedience by the things which he suffered,” and “being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” (Heb. 5:8,9) The expression “being made perfect,” is translated from a Greek word which means “to make complete, consummate.”

The Scriptures assure us that in God’s great plan, not only was Jesus to be exalted to the throne as the world’s Messiah, but there will also be a company of his faithful followers who will receive glory, honor, and immortality. These, in God’s great purpose, are required to pass through similar experiences to those of their Elder Brother and Master, Jesus. Their experiences, therefore, are also illustrated in those of Joseph. However, they are not on an equality with Jesus, who is designated as their “head” and the “captain of their salvation.”—Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18; Heb. 2:10

## **TO SUFFER WITH HIM**

As previously noted, those who have accepted the invitation to become members of the body of

Christ are told that if they “suffer with him,” they will “be also glorified together.” (Rom. 8:17) What does it mean to “suffer with him?”

The Apostle Peter writes, “If when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.” (I Pet. 2:20-23, *English Standard Version*) God counts the sufferings of the faithful ones as very precious, “a fragrance of Christ,” “a fragrant odor, ... truly pleasing to God.”—II Cor. 2:15; Phil 4:18, *WNT*

Having these promises before our mind, all our trials, difficulties, sufferings, and disappointments at the present time may be endured with cheerfulness if we have a proper faith, knowing that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”—Rom. 8:28

Let us go continually to our loving Heavenly Father, who is the “fountain of life,” praying for his grace, wisdom, and truth, that we might develop our character from each experience which he permits us to have in life. (Ps. 36:5-10) Thus, ultimately we will become “more than conquerors [Greek: gain a decisive victory] through him who loved us,” and bought us with his “precious blood.”—Rom. 8:37; I Pet. 1:19 ■