

READING: PAGES 277 TO 279

Providence Preserves a Nation

JOSEPH was released from prison on the orders of Pharaoh and summoned into the presence of the king. This was a type of Christ being raised from the grave in accordance with the divine purpose, to appear before the throne of Glory. Emerging from the typical house of death, Joseph was unfitted to appear before Pharaoh in his existing state. It was necessary for him to be correctly attired before coming into the presence of the king; therefore he “changed his raiment” (Gen. 41:14).

This typified a change of nature. Having been raised from the grave in the same nature in which he had been therein placed (1Cor. 15:12-20, 23), it was necessary for Christ to be “clothed upon” with divine nature before he could ascend into the presence of the Father (Zech. 3:4; Rom. 6:4).

Deeply impressed by Joseph’s ability to interpret dreams, Pharaoh made him “governor” over Egypt. In authority, Joseph was second only to the Monarch himself. In the antitype, Christ now sits “at the right hand” of the Father. And Yahweh, as the Supreme One, has given “all power in heaven and in earth” into the Lord’s hand (Psa. 110:1; Mat. 28:18).

The Divine Hand Upon Egypt

At this time Pharaoh changed Joseph’s name to Zaphnath-paaneah. It is said that this name means “Saviour of the world” (Jerome), or “Revealer of secrets” (Josephus). Stanley gives its meaning as “Rescuer of the world.” In type, all these meanings have some application to the remarkable part Joseph played in the unfolding of the divine purpose; but in the antitype all meanings certainly apply to Yahweh’s purpose in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Joseph was then presented with a bride of very high standing — typifying the Bride of Christ.

He was thirty years of age “when he stood before Pharaoh” (v. 46). This was

ELPIS ISRAEL
an Exposition of the
KINGDOM OF GOD
with reference to
THE TIME OF THE END
and THE AGE TO COME

By JOHN THOMAS, M.D.
the Type of Christ I am bound with this class.—*See*



Jacob having received information of all that had been transacted, proceeded to break up his encampment, and to go down into Egypt as Joseph and Pharaoh had invited him to do. Isaac had been dead ten years, and Jacob had attained the age of one hundred and thirty. Having arrived at Beer-sheba on his way thither, he offered sacrifices to the God of Isaac. On this occasion, God spake unto him, and 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... — Elpis Israel, pp 277-278.

the age at which the Levites were inducted into their office (Num. 4:3). David (an eminent type of Christ) began to reign in Hebron at the same age. Linking these two types, there is an apparent typical relevance to Christ's role as king-priest.

Joseph's words — which came from God, as he readily acknowledged to Pharaoh — began to come true. The "earth brought forth by handfuls." Under the Hand of Providence, Egypt prospered. Then, "when Joseph was thirty-seven years old, the famine began in Egypt. It extended to all the surrounding countries, and was sore in the land of Canaan. Hearing that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob sent 'Joseph's ten brothers' to purchase some" (p. 277).

In this apparently natural set of circumstances, the groundwork was being laid for Israel to be made into a great nation. The divine Hand guided the events of those crucial times. The "Watchers" [*Elohim*] were at work, demonstrating that "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men" for "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand" (Dan. 4:17, 35).

Moved by Guilty Conscience

Brother Thomas states: "Now Joseph, being governor, was the man who sold the grain. This caused the sons of Israel to appear before him; and, as he had predicted, 'they bowed themselves before him with their faces to the earth.' Joseph knew them; but they did not recognise him."

They "knew him not" (ch. 42:8). At the second coming of Christ, the Jewish people will be similarly unable to identify their deliverer: "Who is this king of glory?... what are these wounds in thine hands?" (Psa. 24:8, 10; Zech. 13:6).

Joseph "affected to believe they

were spies, and "put them in ward for three days." He also stated that one of them should remain his prisoner whilst they returned home and came again to Egypt with their youngest brother, Benjamin. Unaware that Joseph could understand their language, they spoke distressingly to one another: "We are verily guilty concerning our brother... therefore is this distress come upon us" (v. 21). Brother Thomas comments: "The harsh treatment they experienced from Joseph brought to their recollection the manner they had treated him... Their consciences accused them..."

Joseph wept privately, deeply moved at witnessing their shame. The brothers thoroughly chastened, Joseph sent them on their way homeward. He had commanded that all their money, used to pay for their corn, should be again placed in their sacks. Horrified at discovering this perplexing turn of events on their homeward journey, they were greatly fearful. Although acknowledging the Hand of God in these strange circumstances, they remained bewildered (v. 28). There was a very good reason for Joseph's action in this matter. His brethren had been confident that money was the answer to their needs, and that they could buy all they needed. However, Joseph was teaching them that *men cannot buy the grace of God*.

The people of Israel will undergo a similar change of heart. "It shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee... *thou shalt call them to mind* among all the nations, whither Yahweh thy Elohim hath driven thee, and shalt return unto Yahweh thy Elohim... And they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son" (Deu. 30:1; Zech. 12:10).

The Brothers Return to Joseph

The divine purpose continued to unfold. "The famine was sore in the land" (ch. 43:1). This may have been accepted as nothing more than a natural calamity; but it was more than this. Yahweh permitted the continuance of the drought because it was necessary to the ultimate blessing of Israel and his family.

As with Jacob, God's saints often undergo the most severe trials, praying for relief, when in Yahweh's purpose the trial is part of a process that will ultimately benefit the suffering saint. This is one reason why trials should be borne in patience; Yahweh's servants praying only for the fulfilment of *His* will in all matters, recognising that His wisdom and will is of far greater worth than that of mere man. The overriding consideration should always be: "Thy will, not mine, be done."

In conformity with Joseph's instruction, and because of their urgent need for further supplies of food, his brethren later returned to Egypt. Much against the aggrieved feelings of Jacob, they took their brother, Benjamin, and also carried with them "the best fruits in the land" (ch. 43:11). When God's saints go forth to meet the antitypical Joseph, they will also be required to bear before him "the best fruits," which are "the fruits of the spirit." Christ told his friends: "I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and *bring forth fruit*, and that your fruit should remain." Natural fruit will not "remain"; it will drop to the ground and rot. But the "fruit of the spirit" is the productive work of the Spirit-Word, which is "incorruptible" and "abideth for ever" (Gal. 5:22; Jn. 15:16; 1Pet. 1:23-25).

In due course, as events continued to unfold in accord with the divine plan, Jacob led his entire family down into

Egypt. And although Joseph is surely the dominant human character in the evolving of this significant drama, one of the most consequential incidents to occur took place, not in Egypt, but in the Promised Land.

Brother Thomas writes: "Jacob, having received information of all that had been transacted, proceeded to break up his encampment, and to go down into Egypt as Joseph and Pharaoh had invited him to do... Having arrived at Beer-sheba on his way thither, he offered sacrifices to the God of Isaac. On this occasion, God spake unto him, and 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*'" (pp. 277-278).

Why would Yahweh desire to see Jacob "go down into Egypt," and to encourage him that the divine presence would continue to be with him?

The Wisdom of Yahweh

It would appear that Jacob's family had been on the brink of disintegration in the Promised Land. The incident concerning Dinah indicates that she went out into the world, with dread consequences (ch. 34). Judah is revealed as having committed four errors: he separated from his brethren (a type of leaving the ecclesia); he formed an association with a Gentile woman; he became the friend of the world; he practised idolatry (ch. 38:1, 2, 12, 20-21).

If these unholy experiences were leading Dinah and Judah away from the spiritual ideals of the Truth, what was happening to the rest of Jacob's family? Obviously, Yahweh had determined that, to fulfil His covenant with Abraham, Jacob and his family needed to be removed from the environment of the wicked Canaanites whose influence

was strongly affecting them. He therefore directed and guided events to ensure that Israel would go down into Egypt. There, they would be *separated* from the Egyptians, isolated in the land of Goshen.

Little wonder that Yahweh addressed Jacob at Beer-sheba with the words: "Fear not to go down into Egypt: for I will there make of thee a great nation" (Gen. 46:1-4). These were the exact words Yahweh had used to Abraham, the words of the covenant. Yahweh would honour His promise; of that Jacob could be assured. The promise had guaranteed that the patriarchs would become "a great nation," but the promise did not indicate *where this would take place*.

Events continued to unfold. "Seventeen years having passed away after his arrival in Egypt, the time drew nigh that Jacob must die. This residence in the land of Ham had not at all diminished his attachment to the land of Canaan" (p. 278). With a perception that could only be engendered through an intelligent reading of Scripture, Brother Thomas draws attention to the fact that Jacob's only concerns at the time of his death were his desire for the promises to be fulfilled, and for a suitable entombment of his body in the Land of the Covenant. He was not at all moved to seek a place in "heaven" for his "soul."

The Faith of the Patriarchs

"Why," asks Brother Thomas, "is all mankind's anxiety now about their 'souls,' and a heaven beyond the skies, when the friends of God, who had all their pilgrimage been the honoured subjects of His fatherly care, manifested no such carefulness...?" Concerning Protestants and Papists, he states that they do not "believe in God" because they do not believe His Word.

"They have a system of faith which bears no affinity to the religion of God; and hence they hope for things which He has not promised..."

Christadelphians of this present generation do well to grasp the import of these words, and to treat them with the respect they deserve. In the current era of hedonism and worldliness, people are expected to conform to the ways of the world as never before. It is essential that the influences of a philosophical, brain-dead generation are rejected and repudiated. The barrier of separation which should segregate the people of God from the fickleness and ungodliness of the world ought to be clearly maintained. A degenerate rationalisation of diabolism is rapidly leading the majority of mankind down the pathway to perdition.

"The last thoughts" of holy men of old, as they contemplated approaching death, "were on 'the exceeding great and precious promises' which are to be manifested in the land of Canaan... Seeing this, then, though afar off, they gave expression to their faith by giving commandment concerning their bodies..." This they did, "by *faith*." Thus, says Brother Thomas, "We must believe the promises concerning Canaan, if we would be immortal of body in the kingdom of God" (p. 279).

The faith of Joseph was genuine and undeniable. Through all the trials and vicissitudes of life he remained true to his God, not doubting the fidelity of Yahweh whom he served.

In all these vital matters he was a remarkable type of the Lord Jesus Christ; an individual whose faithfulness is worthy of emulation by all who aspire to rejoice in his companionship, together with all the approved, in the kingdom of God.

— John Ullman.