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Genesis 41

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Genesis 41.

Topics.

- Seven plumb and attractive cows and seven thin and ugly cows.
- Seven plump ears of grain and seven thin ears of grain.
- Pharaoh calls for magicians and wise men to interpret his dream.
- Pharaoh tells Joseph of his dream of seven plump and seven thin cows.
- Pharaoh tells Joseph of his dream of seven good and seven thin ears.
- Pharaoh puts his signet ring, fine linen and gold chain on Joseph's neck.
- Joseph name is changed to Zaphenath-paneah, he marries Asenath.
- Joseph gathered grain seven years and stored it like sand of the sea.
- Asenath, Potiphera daughter bears Joseph Manasseh and Ephraim.
- An overview of the complete story of Joseph.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

The previous chapter: in chapter forty the Pharaohs' chief cupbearer and chief baker are put in prison with Joseph; they both dream a dream each with its own interpretation; Joseph interprets the two dreams and both dreams are perfectly fulfilled; the chief cupbearer is restored to his position in the royal house and the chief baker is beheaded and his body hung on a tree.

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GENESIS 41:1-4

Seven Plumb and Attractive Cows and Seven Thin and Ugly Cows.

- **Genesis 41:1-4:** After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile, ²and behold, there came up out of the Nile seven cows attractive and plump, and they fed in the reed grass. ³And behold, seven other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of the Nile after them, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. ⁴And the ugly, thin cows ate up the seven attractive, plump cows. And Pharaoh awoke.

The Nile River is the longest in the world it covers some four thousand miles from its sources in equatorial Africa to its divided mouth which open into the Mediterranean Sea. The White Nile is the principal stream with multitudes of tributaries joining it and flowing across the land of Egypt. When the Nile overflows it waters the soil and provides all plant life with rich and new organic fertilizer.

After two whole years: (v1) these two years are most likely taken from the beginning of Joseph's imprisonment. In the dream Pharaoh sees himself standing close to the Nile River and sees in his mind seven fat cows peacefully feeding on the reeds along the banks of the Nile. To his amazement, shock and horror seven thin cows rise up out of the Nile and eat the seven fat cows.

GENESIS 41:5-7

Seven Plump ears of Grain and Seven Thin Ears of Grain.

- **Genesis 41:5-7:** And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time. And behold, seven ears of grain, plump and good, were growing on one stalk. ⁶And behold, after them sprouted seven ears, thin and blighted (blasted in KJV) by the east wind. ⁷And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump, full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream.

In this second dream Pharaoh sees in his mind seven ears of grain growing on a single stork and afterwards he sees seven blighted ears of corn that swallowed up the seven healthy ears of corn. This second dream confirms the message given in the first dream. The impression of the dream imprinted upon Pharaoh's mind was so vivid that during the dream it was taken for the reality until he awoke and perceived that it was only a dream. However, it remained so fixed in his mind, that he knew it was more than a common dream that most of us experience. It was so vividly impressed on his memory and troubling to his spirit that he desperately desired someone to interpret it.

Blighted by the east wind: (v6) (blasted by the east wind in KJV) the east wind is any wind coming from the east of the meridian, and may be a southeast or a northeast, as well as a direct east. The blasting wind in Egypt is usually said to be from the southeast.

GENESIS 41:8

Pharaoh Calls for Magicians and Wise Men to Interpret His Dream.

- **Genesis 41:8:** So, in the morning his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was none who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

Three reasons Pharaoh's spirit was troubled:

1. He was certain that the dreams were supernatural and carried some extraordinary dreaded meaning and therefore feared the consequences.
2. He could not get the horrible images of the thin cows eating the fat cows and the blighted corn swallowing up the healthy corn out of his mind.
3. Whether awake or asleep these images were continually uppermost in his mind and invading his thoughts.

For these reasons he could have no mental rest until he knew the meaning of the dreams.

Pharaoh sent and called for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt: the word magicians in this context probably refers to: -

- The sacred scribes who were skilled in writing and reading hieroglyphics (i.e., mysterious symbols).
- Those whose employment it was to discover secret and future things by the observation of the stars, or by other superstitious practices.
- The occult priests who believed they had insight into the mysterious secrets of the gods, the host of heaven and of nature.
- Those who professed to discover the secrets of future things, either by consulting the stars, or by other superstitious practices.

The wise men: it is difficult to define the exact distinction between magicians and wise men; it seems they formed different branches of a numerous body of various kinds of mystics, who believed they had supernatural skill in revealing mysteries, explaining secrets and symbols and in interpreting dreams.

The wise men were called so because they were educated men and probably men of wealth and noble standing who often made happy predictions concerning future things.

However, both the magicians and wise men practiced some form of magic, divination, astrology (as in reading the stars to discern future events) or the interpretation of dreams, the practise of soothsaying (proclaiming happy endings), or the performing of other occultist practises. By these mystic practises they were not only esteemed as men of great spiritual insight among the kings, the Pharaoh's and people of Egypt, but also gained much fame and wealth.

To the credit of the magicians and wise men: neither the magicians nor the wise men pretended to know the interpretation or meaning of the symbols contained in Pharaoh dream. Even though they all united together in their particular art to interpret the dreams they all admitted that they were baffled and that their mystic skills failed them.

This of course was the will of God that they would all be utterly bewildered in their attempts to interpret Pharaoh's dream and that their boasted magic powers to do so would be thwarted so that the inspired wisdom of Joseph would appear even more remarkable and would show the masses of Egypt's populations that sought out the knowledge of Egypt's so called wise men and magicians that they did not have the power of the true God, but were being led by mystic superstition

Pharaoh told them his dreams: but there was not one wise man or magician that could interpret them to Pharaoh the images were so strange that they had nothing to say to Pharaoh.

GENESIS 41:9-13

The Cupbearer tells Pharaoh how Joseph Interpreted His Dream.

- **Genesis 41:9-13:** Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "I remember my offenses (faults in KJV) today. ¹⁰When Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me and the chief baker in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, ¹¹we dreamed on the same night, he and I, each having a dream with its own interpretation. ¹²A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each man according to his dream. ¹³And as he interpreted to us, so it came about. I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged."

I remember my offenses (faults in KJV) today: (v9) the faults the cupbearer had in mind could refer to:

- The fact he forgot for two years to tell Pharaoh about Joseph after he was set free from prison and restored to his position as chief cupbearer as Joseph had asked him to do.
- The faults he had committed against Pharaoh, by saying, "I do remember my faults" he is acknowledging the king's justice in imprisoning him and his mercy in pardoning him so that the king's goodness, kindness and favour would be toward him so he could tell his story concerning Joseph perfectly interpreting his and the bakers dream.

Due to the fact the king was troubled by the two dreams and because of the strange images of the king's two dreams no magician or wise man could interpret them the cupbearer now remembers Joseph and feels compelled to tell his story concerning Joseph, perhaps for one of the following reasons:

- For his own selfish gain knowing if Joseph interpreted the dream, he would win greater favour from the king.

- From fear that, if the king did find out about Joseph's skill in interpreting dreams and he had not said anything the king would be wrath against him and he would again be cast into prison. Though either one of these may apply the most likely scenario is the following: when the chief cupbearer heard of the king's troubled spirit and that no wise man or magician could interpret his dream, he was instantly reminded of his own dream and troubled spirit and of the Hebrew prisoner who had empathised with him and in perfect detail interpreted his dream.

Now either feeling guilty that he had never mentioned Joseph to Pharaoh or because he saw an opportunity to gain the Pharaoh's favour he approaches the king and tells him of Joseph's amazing skill in interpreting dreams.

NOTE: it is interesting to notice that Joseph is referred to as a young Hebrew (Gen. 41:12) since it shows that even when Israel had only a family the Egyptians were well acquainted with the Hebrew race. The national title for Abram was Hebrew, he was commonly referred to as the Hebrew, (Gen. 14:13) and at this time the proper national title for Joseph was still, "a Hebrew." Jacob's descendants had not yet gotten beyond the family name Hebrew. The title, Israelite was not yet commonly used.

The following verse shows that to the Egyptians the national name Hebrew was at various times used as a term of reproach.

- They (Joseph's Egyptian servants) served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians. (Gen. 43:32).

GENESIS 41:14-16

Pharaoh Brings Joseph Out of the Pit to Interpret His Dream.

- **Genesis 41:14-16:** Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they quickly brought him out of the pit (the dungeon in KJV). And when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh. ¹⁵And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." ¹⁶Joseph answered Pharaoh, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer."

They quickly brought him out of the pit (the dungeon in KJV): (v14) since the prison gatekeeper (also called the prison guard) had at this time made Joseph the overseer of the prisoners and trusted him with all the affairs of the prison (Gen. 39:21-23) it is unreasonable to think that he at this time would still be kept confined in the dungeon of the prison house. During these early ancient years, the dungeon area was a single dark stone room in the prison house that the worst offenders of the king would be cast into. Much like our prison system today that has different prisons to contain different levels of criminals (i.e., we don't put cold hearted murders and violent rapists in the same cells as petty criminals or young offenders), likewise, they had different cells and areas in the one very large guarded stone building.

When he had shaved himself and changed: (v14) after hearing the chief cupbearers' testimony concerning Joseph the Pharaoh sent messengers to the prison keeper (also called the prison guard) to set Joseph free and immediately bring him to him. Upon hearing the king's command, they clothed Joseph with garments suitable to appear before the king and shaved his face clean. In general, the Egyptians only allowed their hair and beards to grow when in mourning (i.e., when in captivity, famine or mourning the death of a loved one etc.). Early ancient Egyptian monuments show only captives and men of low condition with beards. In contrast to this, beards in Palestine were regarded as a manly ornament.

It is almost certain that dressing and shaving Joseph so that he would be acceptable to appear before the king and taking him from the prison to the king was no doubt done in great haste.

It is interesting to notice: the observation that a scholar observed concerning Joseph's trials. He highlights the fact that for each event Joseph suffered by the hands of his brothers there was a reward by the hands of the Egyptians

- His brothers hated him because of his dreams and it was by dreams the Egyptians exalted him.
- His brothers stripped him of his many-coloured coat and the Egyptians clothed him in royal robes.
- His brothers cast him into a pit, and the Egyptians drew him up from the pit of the prison.
- His brothers sold him into slavery and the Egyptians made him lord over them.

Joseph's set time had come Pharaoh sent and called him and no human power or policy could keep him in prison or hinder what God had revealed to him in his dreams. In the book of Psalms, it is written:

- When the LORD summoned a famine on the land and broke all supply of bread, ¹⁷he had sent a man ahead of them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave. ¹⁸His feet were hurt with fetters; his neck was put in a collar of iron; ¹⁹until what he had said came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him. ²⁰The king sent and released him; the ruler of the peoples set him free; ²¹he made him lord of his house and ruler of all his possessions. (Psalm 105:16-21).

This is a principal of life, it is certain that during Joseph long confinement in prison, he would have had moments in which the mystery of his dreams bought him not comfort, but confusion and anxiety and such sorrowful times of distress that he would have had to battle against the troubling thoughts and doubts that invaded his troubled mind in his darkest hours. Christians, no matter how faithful will experience similar times, these the Psalmist says are tests of the LORD in that those who do not have genuine faith will turn bitter against God, proving that they are only giving God lip service while it advantages their life, they confess His name not from a heart of love or because they have a great passion to know Him, but because of the advantages or blessing they believe will come to them. They are those who confess His name for their own gain (i.e., to prosper, be healed or successful and such like things), as long as their life is charmed, they worship God, but the instant life takes a turn for the worse they forsake their faith and forsake God.

Despite all Josephs' extreme troubles, hardships, doubts, sorrows, confusion and anxiety he remained faithful and now all the mystery is about to be revealed and he is soon to be exalted to the right hand of the Pharaoh of Egypt and all his confusion made clear. For many Christians worldwide this same principal will apply, life will bring its hardships, troubles and sorrows and we may never understand why, until that glorious day when the Lord Jesus Christ returns in glory and gathers the faithful to himself, for many it will not be until this unique and glorious day that all will be made clear and all our sorrows and troubles become things of the past.

It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer: (v16) according to Josephs' natural godly nature and faithfulness he ascribes the gift that is in him to interpret dreams to God. History shows that because of its strange symbols and amazing detail and the perfect fulfilment that Joseph's interpretation of the dreams could only come by the inspiration of the one true God the Alpha and Omega who know the beginning and the end.

Pharaoh tells Joseph of His Dream of Seven Plump and Thin Cows.

- **Genesis 41:17-21:** Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Behold, in my dream I was standing on the banks of the Nile. ¹⁸Seven cows, plump and attractive, came up out of the Nile and fed in the reed grass. ¹⁹Seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and thin, such as I had never seen in all the land of Egypt. ²⁰And the thin, ugly cows ate up the first seven plump cows, ²¹but when they had eaten them no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they were still as ugly as at the beginning. Then I awoke.

Ponder for a moment: at this stage the amazing exaltation of Joseph is unknown, to all who know him he is just a worthless Hebrew prisoner who in the eyes of Egypt has no nobility and no value and yet he is brought before the Pharaoh of Egypt. This single act alone could only come to pass by the workings of God's Spirit. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt dressed in royal robes and surrounded by Egyptian grandeur explains to the lowly Hebrew prisoner the first dream he saw in the imagination of his mind.

GENESIS 41:22-24

Pharaoh tells Joseph of His Dream of Seven Good and Thin Ears.

- **Genesis 41:22-24:** I also saw in my dream seven ears growing on one stalk, full and good. ²³Seven ears, withered, thin, and blighted (blasted in KJV) by the east wind, sprouted after them, ²⁴and the thin ears swallowed up the seven good ears. And I told it to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me."

The Pharaoh tells Joseph his second dream and that he has explained these dreams to all the magicians and wise men of Egypt, but not one of them could explain it to him. It matters not whether the correct interpretation is of the east wind blasting the corn or the east wind blighting the corn since they both carry the same idea, which is that the goodness of the corn was shrivelled dry and had no healthy grains of corn in them, there was nothing but the husk and chaff of the corn.

GENESIS 41:25-32

Joseph Interprets Pharaoh Dream of Seven Plump and Thin Cows.

- **Genesis 41:25-32:** Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. ²⁶The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one. ²⁷The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty ears blighted (blasted in KJV) by the east wind are also seven years of famine. ²⁸It is as I told Pharaoh; God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do. ²⁹There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt, ³⁰but after them there will arise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt. The famine will consume the land, ³¹and the plenty will be unknown in the land by reason of the famine that will follow, for it will be very severe. ³²And the doubling of Pharaoh's dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about.

Joseph tells the Pharaoh that though he had two dreams they both have the same meaning and, in this sense, they can be viewed as being one dream. Both dreams point to the same two events which is seven years of amazing abundance and prosperity, to be followed by seven years of extreme drought and famine. The repetition of the dream in two different forms is designed to show the absolute certainty of it. This is incredible scenario when one ponders it for a moment. The most powerful man of

all Egypt humbles himself to listen to a lowly Hebrew prisoner. Truly this is the work of God. Joseph immediately acknowledges the one true eternal God and gives Him honour when he is brought before Pharaoh. Joseph explains to the king that the seven years of abundant harvests will be swallowed up in the seven years of famine, meaning it will seem as if the land and its crops had never been so abundantly blessed. The land will be so barren of plant life that there will be no sight of the previous seven years of fruitfulness. The only signs of the previous seven year's abundance will be the vast amounts of grain that had been stored in each city.

Double dreams: (v32) the dreams in the story of Joseph are double dreams which:

- Confirm the dream is of God.
- Confirm there is a sense of urgency concerning it coming to pass.
- Confirm that it is certain to come to pass and cannot be stopped in anyway.

This same principal of doubling is not limited to dreams only, but also applies to, visions and prophecies throughout Scripture.

GENESIS 41:33-36

Joseph Tells Pharaoh to Appoint Overseers Over the Land of Egypt.

- **Genesis 41:33-36:** Now therefore let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. ³⁴Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land and take one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven plentiful years. ³⁵And let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it. ³⁶That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are to occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish through the famine."

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After interpreting the dream to Pharaoh Joseph advises him what action to take. He turns from being the interpreter to the adviser and tells the king how to prepare for the coming national emergency which he now clearly sees in his mind.

Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land: (v34) appoint wise and loyal officers who Pharaoh is the sovereign king over and give them the power and authority to appoint officers and overseers under them in all cities, towns and villages to manage the storage of corn and grain according to his instruction during the seven fruitful years of abundance. In this way all the produce of the land would be under the supreme control of the hand of Pharaoh.

Take one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt: (v34) some may think, "Surely only a fifth of the produce would not supply the entire population with food for seven years during the time of the famine, so why only take a fifth part since the years of famine were to be as many as the years of abundance?" The following two suggestions will help answer this question:

1. During the seven years of great abundance everyone would be prospering which means that much of the produce would not be fully consumed or easily sold and therefore it would be very easy for a vast number of farmers and labourers in all parts of the country to store up great quantities of corn and grain for their own households. Partly because the abundance was so great that they could not eat or sell it all and partly because they knew scarcer times were coming and therefore the quantity of grain that had been stored up in the cities of Egypt would go much further.

2. During the seven years of abundance God's favour was upon the land which means that certain parts of it that were normally barren were most likely made fruitful so that a fifth part of the produce stored from the years of abundance would be more than the half or even equal to the whole crop of ordinary years. Taking a fifth of all the produce would no doubt have at first been seen by the populations to be an extraordinary measure that would put much hardship upon many of them. However, the Pharaoh was not taking such measures for his own selfish gain, but to save the people under his rule. It is also certain, since God was with Joseph and His favour was upon the land that their first crop was so abundant that even after giving a fifth part of it to the king, they were still better off than they were in a normal year of farming. It is also certain that in the following six years of abundance they prospered far above what they normally did in ordinary years. Some commentators rightfully say that when Joseph advised the Pharaoh to take up a fifth of all that the land produced, he would not have been advising the king to do this by force or violence. However, it is a principal of God that all people should subject themselves to rulers and authorities who minister for their good.

- Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ²Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. (Rom. 13:1-4).

This means that should the people of Egypt rebel against the advice that Joseph had given the Pharaoh and that the king (based on Joseph's good advice) decreed to be done throughout the land and people rebelled against it, they by their own rebellious actions force those Pharaoh had placed under his authority to use a strong hand to bring them into obedience. It is not Pharaoh's men that would be doing wrong before God, but those that are in rebellion to the king. Obviously, Joseph would never advise anyone to use force or violence, but in our world of sin and self-centeredness, not everything is in the kings' control or happens as we might wish it would.

GENESIS 41:37-40

Pharaoh Sets Joseph Over His House and all the Land of Egypt

- **Genesis 41:37-40:** This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. ³⁸And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?" ³⁹Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. ⁴⁰You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you."

Pharaoh knowing that there was not one person in the entire Empire of Egypt that practise occult or mystic arts or who worshipped the gods of Egypt or other gods or that sought the host of heaven for future things to come or to interpret visions and dreams immediately recognises that the Spirit of the God that Joseph worshipped was influencing and guiding him in his wise counsel and advice.

Pharaoh tells Joseph he shall be over all his house: (v40) Pharaoh was so stunningly and highly impressed with the Hebrew prisoner who stood before him he not only made him the overseer of all his domestic affairs, his family and the principal man in his palace and court, but also exalted him to be the chief ruler over his whole kingdom so that whatever he ordered and commanded them to do all the people of Egypt should obey his orders, without his command or his approval no one was to do

anything. Joseph was so highly exalted that all things done in the entire kingdom of Egypt would be done by his command and nothing was to be done without his approval.

Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you: (v40) only the king of Egypt had greater sovereign power and authority over the whole kingdom of Egypt than Joseph. Other than the Pharaoh himself there was none greater than Joseph. Pharaohs' statement, "Only in the throne will I be greater," means only in regards to all that concerns the king's royal rank, dignity as king, and the rights of the king. He alone would be king, wear the crown sit upon the throne, and have all the ensigns of royal majesty in these things Joseph was to have no authority, but he had the full power and authority to teach, instruct, and direct the king's princes, rulers, leaders, counsellors and subjects.

- When he summoned a famine on the land and broke all supply of bread, ¹⁷he had sent a man ahead of them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave. ¹⁸His feet were hurt with fetters; his neck was put in a collar of iron; ¹⁹until what he had said came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him. ²⁰The king sent and released him; the ruler of the peoples set him free; ²¹he made him lord of his house and ruler of all his possessions, ²²to bind his princes at his pleasure and to teach his elders wisdom. (Psalm 105:16-21).

Pharaoh so highly approved of Joseph's counsel and wisdom he gave him all executive power and authority over the king's princes, elders and his subjects in the land to teach, instruct, and direct at his pleasure.

GENESIS 41:41-44

Pharaoh puts His Signet Ring and Gold Chain on Joseph's Neck.

- **Genesis 41:41-44:** And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." ⁴²Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck. ⁴³And he made him ride in his second chariot. And they called out before him, "Bow the knee!" Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt. ⁴⁴Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."

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Pharaoh put his signet ring (ring only in KJV) on Joseph's hand: (v42) the word ring in this verse comes from the Hebrew word (*taba`*) it literally means a seal (as sunk into the wax), i.e. signet (for sealing), but can also refer to a ring in general or a ring of any kind. The king's signet-ring gave Joseph the delegated power of the sovereign Monarch himself and established him the position of prime minister. All in Pharaoh's kingdom were naturally aware that the king's royal signet ring was the final symbol of authority, when a document was stamped by it, whatever law or command that document contained became law throughout the entire land of Egypt. The royal signet ring was not only the token of the highest authority and power, but also the token of the highest honour and dignity. Placing the ring on Joseph's hand gave him absolute authority to make and sign whatever decrees and laws he thought would benefit the kingdom of Egypt and its people.

Pharaoh clothed Joseph in garments of fine linen: (v42) the word linen in this verse comes from the Hebrew word (*meshiy*) it literally means bleached stuff, (i.e. white linen, silk or cotton), but can refer to any finely woven linen (especially silk drawn from the cocoon) dyed of various beautiful and rich colours. Here it refers to garments only worn by those of the highest rank. Egypt was celebrated for was the fineness of its textures its priests and the king's highest officials were arrayed in robes of linen. In the East it was usual to show royal favour by adorning those favoured with finely woven garments to indicate that those wearing them were admitted into the royal ruling class of the king.

Pharaoh put a gold chain about Joseph's neck: (v42) the word chain in this verse comes from the Hebrew word (*rabad*) it literally means, a collar (as spread around the neck). It refers to a gold badge, chain or collar worn as an ornamental necklace or badge that indicated the degree of a person's rank, honour, dignity and privilege. The following verses show that during this ancient time period a gold chain placed around the neck was badge of great honour and a symbol of great authority.

- I (The LORD) clothed you (Jerusalem) with embroidered cloth and with fine leather. I wrapped you in fine linen and covered you with silk ¹¹and I adorned you with ornaments and put bracelets on your wrists and a chain on your neck. (Ezek. 16:10-11).
- The king (Belshazzar) declared to the wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing, and shows me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. (Dan. 5:1, 7, 16). Then Belshazzar gave the command, and Daniel was clothed with purple, a chain of gold was put around his neck, and a proclamation was made about him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. (Dan. 5:29).

Pharaoh made Joseph to ride in his second chariot: (v43) to ride in public procession in the second chariot, meaning the chariot next to the Pharaoh was not only the greatest honour that the king could bestow upon any man, but also showed to the entire population of Egypt that other than Pharaoh himself there was no one with greater power and authority than Joseph had.

I would encourage the reader to pause here for a moment: and take a moment to ponder the hardships and troubles Joseph had suffered (i.e., hated by his brothers; violently thrown into a pit; sold as a slave; falsely accused of raping Pharaoh's wife and wrongfully imprisoned). Now consider the following: there is no way that he as a young humble lowly Hebrew man or anyone else could have known that he would be exalted to the right hand side of the Pharaoh of Egypt and be given total power over all the dealings of his kingdom and even over all the affairs of his household. Nor could anyone comprehend that the people of Egypt would bow to Joseph or that the king would say to him, "Without his consent no one will lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt" (v44). This means that without Joseph's command or his authority no one was to do anything. whatever anyone wished to do concerning the land, farming, growing crops, grain and corn etc., or concerning any matter within the Empire of Egypt they would by law firstly have to get Joseph's approval. All of these amazing facts shine a brilliant spotlight upon the truth that Joseph's royal exaltation was truly a work of God.

GENESIS 41:45

Joseph Name Changed to Zaphenath-paneah, He Marries Asenath.

- **Genesis 41:45:** And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenath-paneah. And he gave him in marriage Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On. So Joseph went out over the land of Egypt.

The Egyptians generally has a distain for the Hebrews yet Pharaoh not only accepts him into his family, but appoints him ruler over all the affairs of his household and his kingdom which was totally contrary to normal Egyptian custom. His motivation to break years of tradition was his conviction that the Spirit of God was in Joseph. Now to render Joseph's exalted royal status more compatible with his new Egyptian rank and the Egyptian people the Pharaoh naturalises him by giving him the Egyptian name Zaphenath-paneah. Following are the most common suggestions that various commentators have considered Joseph's new Egyptian name Zaphenath-paneah means:

- He who reveals secrets or he who reveals future things.
- He who is the food of life or he who is the food of the living.

- He who is the saviour of the world (i.e., the living world) or he who is the saviour of the land.
- He who feeds the world or he who feeds the living.
- He to who hidden things are revealed or he who flees from pollution (i.e., adultery).

Since all of these meanings apply to Joseph's life it is a pointless exercise to debate which meaning is the correct one, the wise thing to do is accept them all since they all apply to different aspects of Joseph's life. The Pharaoh placed all his trust in Joseph to be the preserver of all Egyptian life, and as such exalted him to his right hand side to be the chief overseer of his plan to save the country of Egypt from the coming famine and gave him a name that is apt to his character, his skills, his godly wisdom and his exalted royal Egyptian status.

Pharaoh gave Joseph in marriage to Asenath: (v45) she was the Egyptian daughter of Potiphara the priest of On. The word priest comes from the Hebrew word (*Kohen and Kahan*) it literally means one officiating, especially as a priest, but can also refer a principal officer, a chief ruler or prince. The word kahan means to mediate in religious services; to officiate as a priest and to minister in the priest's office. Some commentators suppose that Joseph being a worshipper of the true God could never marry a worshipper of the sun god. From this mindset they point out the fact that there is nothing in the context to determine the sense of the word priest and because of this they feel that it could be translated, "Pharaoh gave Joseph in marriage to Asenath daughter of Potiphara the prince of On." They reason that it is more likely that Pharaoh would marry his prime minister into the family of one of his princes than of his priests and that it is more agreeable to the exalted position Joseph was raised to, as well as more suitable to his character as a worshipper of the true God. Though this is possible there is no necessary reason to change the word priest to prince for the following seven reasons:

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1. The Egyptian priests were second to the king in honour and authority and were always in his presence and looked to for their spiritual and secular council.
2. Intermarriage into a family of the highest and most privileged class as the priesthood would have immediately completed Joseph's naturalization into Egypt and his acceptance by the people of Egypt.
3. Joseph lived his life with the knowledge that God was in control of his life and was guiding him, especially since the exaltation of such a lowly Hebrew slave and prisoner could only come about by the workings of God's Spirit.
4. At no stage does Joseph deny his God, in all his dealing with the Pharaoh he is honest and blunt in acknowledging the true God. and the Pharaoh himself immediately recognize that the Spirit of God dwelt within him.
5. The king of Egypt after having experienced the omniscience and omnipotence of Joseph's God in his two dreams was not only willing to offer Joseph's God the same adoration that he was accustomed to offer the national gods of Egypt, but was also willing to allow Joseph full liberty to worship the God of his fathers and allow him to raise up his family in the Hebrew faith.
6. Joseph would rightly regard the whole matter as being in God's sovereign purposes (though he might not have known the exact purpose or how great it would be).
7. The Egyptians and Joseph's own Hebrew family fully trusted him as the overseer of their lives to guide and save them, likewise Joseph trusted God as the overseer of his life to guide and save him.

Added to these the following verses show that throughout the story and despite his marriage to Asenath Joseph always remained faithful to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob the God of his Hebrew family.

- Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh. "For," he said, "God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house." ⁵²The name of the second he called Ephraim, "For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction." (Gen. 41:51-52).
- On the third day Joseph said to them, "Do this and you will live, for I fear God. (Genesis 42:18).
- Joseph lifted up his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, "Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me? God be gracious to you, my son!" (Gen. 43:29).
- Do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. (Gen. 45:5).
- God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. ⁹Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not tarry. (Gen. 45:7-9).
- Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me here." And he said, "Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them." (Gen. 48:9).

There is no doubt that on Egyptian public festive occasions Joseph would have been required to attend at the religious ceremonies of the Egyptian gods. We all know the awkwardness and difficulty we feel inwardly when, because of various work situations, commitments or other worldly responsibilities we find ourselves in the company of men and woman of other faiths. It is safe to suppose that Joseph when attending such public religious ceremonies felt some level of distain and difficulty. But it should be kept in mind that at this early period of time Egypt's worship had not degenerated into the extremely corrupt idolatry of later times, and that though they did have many gods they still recognised that there was one supreme God above all other gods. Pharaoh himself credits Joseph's God as being the supreme God. The ancient early Egyptian religion was a corrupted religion, but it was not void of all truth. Pharaoh himself speaks as one that acknowledged a supreme God:

- Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?" ³⁹Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are." (Gen. 41:38-39).

Added to this Joseph freely used the name of his God when speaking to Pharaoh as the above verses show and as for Asenath his Egyptian wife there is no doubt Joseph as her husband would have taught her all things concerning the one true God and the future promises the God of the Hebrews had given to Abraham and his descendants. We, who now know more than Joseph did see that his advancement in the Empire of Egypt served the most important purposes relative to his Hebrew family and the birth of Israel's Messiah, the birth of the church and the spread of the Gospel to all nations. Had an Egyptian ruler been exalted to the high position that Pharaoh exalted Joseph to it is certain he would have had no concern in saving the Hebrews and had Jacob's family died out there would be no Messiah, no church and no Gospel. When one ponders all these facts and bears in mind the absolute offense it would have been to the Pharaoh, the Priest of On and the people of Egypt for Joseph to refuse to take the hand of Asenath in marriage and that by it he was able to save the people of Egypt and more importantly the Hebrew people it should not be difficult for any Christian to understand why Joseph married Asenath.

On: is an Egyptian word that signifies the sun it was one of the oldest cities of ancient Egypt, and the principal seat of worship of the sun god

Ra: (Helios in Greek), because of this it became important as a religious centre rather than a political centre. It was one of the three main cities that Joseph stored the grain in during Egypt's seven years of plenty. Overtime it became famous as a cult centre to Ra the sun God and for its temple. Recognizing its religious fame the Greeks renamed it Heliopolis. Jeremiah calls the city of On, Heliopolis (also called Bethshemesh) in the following verse:

- He shall break the obelisks of Heliopolis (Bethshemesh in KJV) which is in the land of Egypt, and the temples of the gods of Egypt he shall burn with fire. (Jer. 43:13).

Bethshemesh: comes from the Hebrew word (*bayith*) and (*shemesh*). The word (*bayith*) means the house of the sun, while the word (*shemesh*) means to be brilliant (i.e., as the sun) and by implication the east. Today there still remains ruins of the city, its temples and other buildings as it was destroyed by the Persians.

NOTE: it should be highlighted that this Potipherah is not the same Potiphar spoken of in (Gen. 39:1) that was Joseph's master since Joseph would never marry a daughter that came from such a wicked lying mother that had blatantly lied to her husband saying Joseph tried to force her into her bedroom to lie with her and by her lie was the cause of his wrongful imprisonment. Nor would the Pharaoh expect Joseph to marry such a daughter. Besides this the Potiphar who had Joseph imprisoned was not the Priest of On, but an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard (Gen. 37:36) (Gen. 39:1).

So Joseph went out over the land of Egypt: (v45) either in the name of the Pharaoh of Egypt or in the fame of his own Egyptian name Zaphnath-paaneah touring throughout the cities and country side of Egypt to observe the fruitfulness of its land and seek out wise places to set up stores for the grain and establish his laws. It would be safe for us to suppose that the expression, "Joseph went out over the land of Egypt," embraces within its meaning the idea that all the overseers and principal men that he has appointed for the work went out over the land in his name.

GENESIS 41:46-49

Joseph stored Food and Grain Seven Years like Sand of the Sea.

- **Genesis 41:46-49:** Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt. ⁴⁷During the seven plentiful years the earth produced abundantly, ⁴⁸and he gathered up all the food of these seven years, which occurred in the land of Egypt, and put the food in the cities. He put in every city the food from the fields around it. ⁴⁹And Joseph stored up grain in great abundance, like the sand of the sea, until he ceased to measure it, for it could not be measured.

Joseph was thirty years old: (v46) when he stood before Pharaoh interpreting his dreams, in Genesis chapter thirty-seven it is written:

- Joseph, being seventeen years old, was pasturing the flock with his brothers. He was a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. (Gen. 37:2).

This not only means that thirteen years has passed from the time he left his father Jacob to the time he stood before Pharaoh, but also means that for thirteen years his faith had been tried and tested as he lived a life of humiliation, affliction and suffering during this time. However, he died when he was one-hundred and ten years old (Gen. 50:26) which means that he lived around eighty-years from the time the Pharaoh of Egypt exalted him so the time of his enduring affliction was rewarded with a much longer period of prosperity. All faithful Christians should keep this in mind, no matter how long our faith is tested and tried while living in

our mortal body and this fallen and corrupted world, all our sorrows will be superseded when we are raised to everlasting life and eternal happiness in glory. The apostle Paul expressed this thought in the following words:

- The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. ¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. (Rom. 8:1-39).

Joseph gathered up all the food of the seven years: (v48) this gives a striking idea of the exuberant fertility of this land that, from the great abundance of the seven plenteous years, enough corn was laid up not only for the provision of Egypt's own population, but also for the provision of neighbouring countries during the seven years of drought and famine.

It could not be measured: (v49) this signifies that at the beginning Joseph took an account of the quantities of grain that were being stored up and how much there was in each granary, but it became so immense that it could no longer be measured in any way. The expression, "it was like the sand of the sea," is a hyperbolic (extreme exaggeration) used by the writer to signify the great abundance of it.

GENESIS 41:50-52

Asenath Bears Joseph Manasseh and Ephraim.

- **Genesis 41:50-52:** Before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph. Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On, bore them to him. ⁵¹Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh. "For," he said, "God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house." ⁵²The name of the second he called Ephraim, "For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."

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Sometime during Egypt's seven years of plenty and prior to the seven years of famine Joseph's Egyptian wife Asenath gave birth to Manasseh and Ephraim.

Manasseh: comes from the Hebrew word (*nashah*) it signifies forgetfulness, to forget, and figuratively, to neglect, to remove and to deprive. He was a grandson of Jacob. The tribe of Joseph descendant from him and its territory.

Joseph said. "God has made me forget," (v51) meaning now that he has been freed from prison and given such a high royal position in Pharaoh's palace he has forgotten all the past hardships, (i.e., the rejection of his good master, because of his wife's evil lies, the prison and the injuries his brother afflicted upon him). This does not mean that he has utterly forgotten, no one forgets such horrific experiences, and later when we read of Joseph's brothers coming before him it is very clear that Joseph had not forgotten the violent way, they had treated him. What it does mean is that because of the grandeur and honour, wealth and riches, power and authority he had now been blessed with, the dominant thoughts of his mind were upon all the goodness in his life, rather than upon all the past horrors, struggles, sorrows and sadness. It is by taking Joseph life from extreme sorrow to extreme joy that God made him to forget the sorrows of his past, meaning they were no longer the invading, permanent and dominate thoughts of his mind.

Ephraim: comes from the Hebrew word (*'Ephrath*) it signifies double fruit and carries the idea of fruitfulness. He was a son of Joseph; also, the tribe descended from him and its territory. Clearly Joseph named his two sons according to his life firstly of sorrow and affliction signified by the name Manasseh and secondly of prosperity and blessing signified by the name Ephraim. It is very likely Joseph named his second son Ephraim because

God had made him fruitful in the land of his affliction (v52) and therefore he had in mind the following two things, firstly, fruitfulness in faith, grace, humility, patience, love and good works and secondly, his fruitfulness in the interpretation of dreams, his wisdom in political affairs, in his abundance of wealth and the honour Pharaoh had place upon him and in the fruitfulness of his body by his two children, Manasseh and Ephraim

GENESIS 41:53-57

All Lands Suffer Seven Years Famine, but Egypt had Bread.

- **Genesis 41:53-57:** The seven years of plenty that occurred in the land of Egypt came to an end, ⁵⁴and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. There was famine in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. ⁵⁵When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph. What he says to you, do." ⁵⁶So when the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. ⁵⁷Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth.

The fertility of Egypt depends on the rise of the waters of the Nile to a certain level, when its waters reach this level, they flow over all the country fertilising and nourishing every form of plant life. If the river does not reach this level, there will be deficiency in the crops according to the lack of rise in the river's waters. The rise of the Nile naturally depends upon the tropical rains falling upon the lake that it flows from. These tropical rains depend on the clouds formed by the winds from the Mediterranean Sea and upon the strength of the sun's heat producing evaporation on the surface of it. The same natural causes that fertilise the land and make it fruitful are the same causes that bring upon it drought and famine. Because of this some suggest that this famine came about by natural means and not by the hand of God. At some level they are correct, but it is God who controls nature according to his will. Added to this is the fact that the seven years of fruitfulness and the seven years of famine were revealed to the Pharaoh of Egypt in dreams before the event came to pass and Joseph by the influence and Spirit of God interpreted them. It is not uncommon for God to bring about His will through what appears to mankind to be natural means. It should always be remembered that it was God who established the laws of nature and the weather patterns as we know them today and that though we are bound by them God being the creator of them is not.

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There was famine in all lands: (v53) all the lands embraces all the countries in the neighbourhood of Egypt (Syria, Arabia, Palestine, Canaan etc.). When the people from all these neighbouring nations heard that Joseph had appointed overseers to open all the stores in various cities of Egypt to sell grain and corn to whoever came they travelled with horses, donkeys, camels and wagons to purchase food for themselves and their families. Some might wonder, "why didn't Joseph freely give the grain to the poverty-stricken populations?" Perhaps the following two suggestions may help answer this question:

1. Had he done so, people would have taken far more than they needed and in this way the grain would never have lasted seven years.
2. He still had to pay those who stored the grain and all who were involved in the administration work and labour of distributing it to all nations and it is certain he sold it at a moderate price.

The stores of grain: would have been obtained by one of the following two methods:

1. Lawful taxation.
2. The purchase of it.

The seven years of famine showed that by Joseph storing up this grain he not only saved the lives of the people of Egypt, but also of the surrounding nations that came to the storehouses during the seven years' famine and saved the Hebrew race from who the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of the world came from.

JOSEPH AS A TYPE OF CHRIST

Following are eight ways in which Joseph can be viewed as a type of Christ:

1. Joseph was wrongly accused by his master's wife, likewise Christ was falsely accused by the Jews.
2. Joseph was taken and cast into prison, likewise Christ was taken as a prisoner.
3. Joseph was a revealer of secrets, likewise Christ revealed all the secrets of his heavenly Father's mind and will and the mysteries of His grace
4. Joseph was raised to great honour and glory in Pharaoh's court, likewise Christ was exalted by his heavenly Father, and crowned with great glory and honour
5. Joseph was given a new name, Zaphnathpaaneah, which many interpret to mean, Saviour of the world, likewise Christ was sent into the world to save the world.
6. Joseph had all the stores of corn under his care to sustain, nourish and save people from all nations who came to him, likewise Christ has all the spiritual treasures of God's grace in his hand to sustain, nourish and save people from all nations who come to him.
7. Joseph was the only one who had the means to save the nations during the famine of food throughout the land, likewise Christ is the only one who has the means to save the nations from the famine of spiritual food throughout the earth.
8. Joseph gladly gave sustaining, nourishing and life-saving food to all who humbled themselves and came to him, likewise Christ gladly gives sustaining, nourishing and life-saving food to all who humble themselves and come to him.

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Joseph confusion made clear: it is certain that when Joseph was by the Pharaoh's authority exalted to royal power he would have humbly and thankfully become aware of God's special and unique workings upon his life through all his confusing difficult, strange and mysterious experiences. Likewise, all the troubles and confusion of all those who belong to God's Kingdom in Christ will become clear on that glorious day of the resurrection.

Dreams: history and the very exact and specific detail of Pharaoh's dreams clearly show that they were not random dreams as we all dream and experience at various times, but were dreams sent by God and dreams that were fully under His control. Now that God speaks to us through His written word and no longer by dreams, we do not need to heed them today. As we travel into the next chapter, we see that the famine reaches the chosen family and Joseph's boyhood dreams are almost fulfilled.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE COMPLETE STORY OF JOSEPH

When the previous chapters and the following ones are viewed as a complete whole, we see the wonder in the way in which God's sovereign purpose was brought about through:

- The wickedness of Joseph brothers to sell him to the Ishmaelite's.
- The evil workings of Potiphar's seductive wife and her sinful accusations against Joseph.
- Joseph's years of wrongful imprisonment.
- The forgetfulness of the chief cupbearer to bring Joseph to the attention of Pharaoh when he was released from prison and restored to his previous place in the royal house.

Despite all these things we see as we travel through the story that God achieves His sovereign purposes through the natural and sinful affairs of mankind. This is the wonder and mystery of the sovereignty of God. It was these evil events and sinful actions that prepared the way for Joseph to save his family from certain death due to the great famine in the land, and prepared the way for Jacob's family to go down to Egypt which ends in their deliverance by Moses, which leads to the establishing of the true faith in the world and the spread of it amongst all nations by the Gospel. The story of Joseph is an ugly story of jealousy, wickedness, sinfulness and cruel hate that shines a vivid light upon the following four truths:

1. The wickedness of mankind's afflictions is often the direct path to the fulfilment of God's purposes
2. Mankind in their rebellion and sin often act as blind instruments to bring about God's sovereign purposes.
3. God's great purposes are often worked out and come to pass by the works of the wicked even though they are unconscious that they are bringing it to pass.
4. God's choice that Israel would be His chosen people and nation was not grounded on any merit in them, but on His sovereign purpose.

The stories undisguised openness in revealing such sins is the tone of Scripture throughout the Bible. It never attempts to hide the faults even of God's best men. It tells its story with open honesty and without showing any favouritism by covering the sins of its great kings and prophets. Whether a heavenly man or an earthly man the faults and flaws of neither are hidden. The Bible tells its story as it is in reality with all mankind's goodness and all their ugliness to bring out into the open the hidden and unseen inward nature of humanity, both the good and the bad. It does this to shine a light upon the truth that no one is without sin and that we all need a Saviour.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
