

If you were to read in modern literature a story like the one we are going to consider today, you simply would not believe it. "These things just do not happen," you would say. This is just something that we cannot imagine anybody doing to another person, or happening to somebody, or coming out the way it did. And yet before us today in our survey of the Bible, we have such a story.

There are many interesting records and stories in the Bible and it is difficult to pick and to choose those which seem to be most important. But I have chosen for this message the story of Joseph. I don't suppose many people can forget some of the facts about Joseph's life. Many people know something about the coat of many colors, but there are many more things in the life of Joseph which are equally important, and the way the story turns out is almost unbelievable.

You will find this account beginning in the thirty-seventh chapter of the book of Genesis and continuing on through the rest of that book. Joseph, you may remember, was the eleventh son of Jacob. In our last message we traced the beginning of the call to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob which resulted eventually in the choosing of the people of Israel. Jacob had twelve sons and these became the twelve tribes of Israel. Joseph was the eleventh. His mother was Rachel, and he was the eldest of her children. We are told in the thirty-seventh chapter of Genesis that Joseph was the beloved son of Jacob. Jacob loved Joseph more than all his children because he was the son of his old age. This didn't exactly endear Joseph to the rest of his brethren, and you remember that they wanted to kill him because he'd had some dreams (he was only about seventeen at that time so you can't blame him too much for talking about those dreams). His brethren, however, didn't like what seemed to be the obvious implication of the dreams; namely, that Joseph would be exalted over his brethren. So they wanted to kill him. But by the intervention of one of his brothers, Reuben, he was sold instead to a traveling band who eventually took him to Egypt. There he was sold as a slave to Potiphar.

Now the next interesting part of Joseph's life finds him in prison for the simple reason that he chose to remain pure and holy, moral and upright in the sight of God. Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph, but he resisted her and because he did, she became angry and had him thrown into prison. In the prison he also interpreted some dreams and because he interpreted them correctly, eventually after about two years he was taken out of prison and ultimately became elevated to the second highest position in the land of Egypt.

There were very interesting things that happened. In the first place, it isn't normal for brethren to sell one of their own family into slavery. It is certainly not normal for a slave to become a ruler in the kingdom in which he has been sold. It's like a freedom advocate being second in a dictatorial country. Joseph was made second to the king of Egypt. He was about thirty when this happened. You remember that there was a famine that came to Egypt which had

been predicted by Joseph, and Joseph under the king's authority made provision for the years of famine that were to come to pass. His plan was sensible; his plan was organized, and his plan was the salvation of the people of Egypt. When the famine came, Egypt had food because Joseph had prepared for this famine, but people in Palestine did not have food because they had not prepared. So the family of Joseph, Jacob and his other children, being hungry and hearing that there was food in Egypt, sent for that food. Some of the family came down then to Egypt. Joseph of course, recognized them and on the first visit he kept Simeon as a hostage, so to speak, until they should return with the other brother, Benjamin, who had not come the first time. On the second visit he tried to keep Benjamin by putting a cup in his bag, and then when the brethren returned, Joseph revealed himself to his own family. Finally the story, this most unusual story, ends in the happiest way with the father, Jacob, coming down to Egypt and living there the last seventeen years of his life and dying happily reunited with Joseph and with the other members of the family.

Now Joseph, I think, being the most unusual person that he was, is a very wonderful illustration of another unique person. Joseph, in all that happened to him certainly can be said to have been unique and all that happened to our Lord Jesus Christ is also unique. Joseph, I believe becomes a very interesting and detailed picture, illustration, and analogy to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Both of them were born because God specially intervened in each case and caused their birth. In the case of Joseph, it was done through the natural means of a father and a mother. In the case of our Lord Jesus Christ, intervention involved the Virgin Birth without a human father. Both of these persons were special objects of the father's love. Jacob loved Joseph more than all his children, and our Lord Jesus Christ was the well beloved Son of the Father. Both of these individuals were hated by their own brethren. Joseph was hated until they sold him into the place of death, and our Lord Jesus Christ was hated. He Himself said, "They hated me without a cause," and another said of Him, "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." Instead of receiving Him they rejected Him. His own people, the people of Israel whom He had chosen and whom He had cared for, rejected Him. He was rejected by His brethren. But perhaps both of these persons are most similar in the fact that both were servants. Joseph was a servant in the land of Egypt and he made himself a servant to his brethren. Our Lord Jesus Christ was a servant for all. He took upon Himself the form of a servant and became obedient unto death.

The story does not end there. It has a happy ending in both cases. Joseph was delivered by the miraculous power of God out of the prison. Joseph took a Gentile bride during the time that he was in Egypt. Our Lord came to earth and when His own Israelitish people rejected Him, He similarly turned to the Gentiles and today, for the most part, is taking from among them a people for His name. James tells us about this in the fifteenth chapter of Acts. God through Peter for the first time did visit Gentiles to take out from among them a people for His name. This was unusual and abnormal in the case of Joseph that he should seek a Gentile bride, and this, of course, is the reason you and I have any hope before God because our Lord Jesus sought for Himself a bride from among the nations. Our Lord and Joseph were both exalted to places of

honor. Joseph was second in command in the land of Egypt and our Lord exalted at the right hand of God in the place of honor and of privilege. When you have a dinner party and you're thinking about seating the guests, you reserve the position at the right hand of the hostess for the honored guest. So when the Bible speaks of the Lord being exalted at the right hand of the Father, it is the place of honor and privilege He deserves for having come to this earth to die for men.

In the second chapter of Philippians the unique person of Jesus Christ is presented in this matter of humbling and then of exaltation like Joseph. We read that He (Jesus Christ) was in the "form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Why did all of these things happen to Joseph? What was God's purpose in allowing such unusual events to come into the life of this young lad? The purpose was a very simple one, revealed many years later, but a very simple one; and that was that he should ultimately become the Savior of his own people. Because God sent him ahead into Egypt, he was able thereby to save the family of Jacob and the others from the sure death that would have come from the famine that came upon the land. Joseph was there prepared in the plan of God for the salvation of his people. Why did God send our Lord Jesus to this earth? For the same exact reason, in order that He might save His people from their sin. Famine is terrible but sin is worse. Famine is temporal, but sin is eternal. Joseph was a savior, but only a human savior. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Savior, the divine human Savior who can save people from their sin. Have you confessed Him? He came and He is exalted that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. This is the only hope for mankind today, to receive this Savior and through Him all of the assurance and guarantee of forgiveness of sin and a home in heaven. This is an unusual story. The story of your life may be unusual too. It can only have a happy ending if you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.