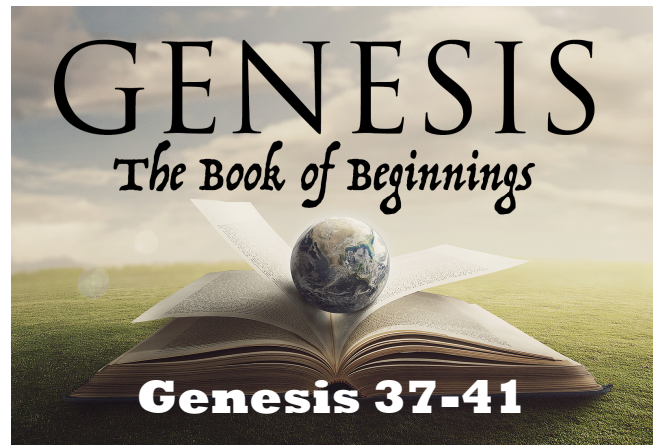


11 • The Beginning of a Plan to Keep Many People Alive

In the last lesson (next week) of our series, we'll hear Joseph, son of Jacob, say to his brothers:

“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.”
(Gen 50:20)



In order to understand what Joseph is talking about, we have to start at the beginning of this amazing plan of God, and it probably doesn't start the way any one of us would have drawn it up. [Genesis 37](#) begins with Joseph at seventeen years old.

Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him.
(37:3-4)

Feelings within the family got even more complicated when Joseph had two dreams:

1. He and his brothers were binding sheaves in the field when the sheaves of his brothers gathered around his sheaf and bowed down to it.
2. The sun, moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to him.



When Joseph shared his dreams? His brothers said to him...

“Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?” So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. (37:8)

In [Genesis 37:12-14](#), Israel sent Joseph to check on his brothers. When they see Joseph coming, they conspire to kill him (37:18).

Reuben convinces them to throw Joseph into a pit instead, but while he is away, Judah suggests selling Joseph to a caravan of Ishmaelites headed for Egypt, where he is sold to an officer of Pharaoh named Potiphar (37:36).

[Genesis 39:2](#) tells us, “the LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man.” But when he is falsely accused by Potiphar's wife of inappropriate conduct, he is thrown in prison (39:20). Some time after this, Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker are put in the same prison and have dreams of their own (40:5-19). Joseph interprets and foretells that the cupbearer will be restored to his position. “Only remember me, when it is well with you, and please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this house” (40:14). But the chief cupbearer forgot...

After two whole years (41:1), Pharaoh has strange dreams of his own that no one could interpret (41:1-8) ... except Joseph, who reveals to Pharaoh that seven years of plenty were ahead, followed by seven years of famine. When Joseph proposes a wise plan, Pharaoh makes him the second most powerful person in Egypt. When the famine eventually spreads throughout Egypt and far beyond, “all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain” (41:56-57).

For Class & Family Discussion:

- Is there anything alarming in what we are told in [Genesis 37:3-4](#)?
- What should we make of Joseph's two dreams in [37:5-11](#)?
- How did the brothers lead their father to believe that Joseph was dead ([37:31-33](#))? Is there anything we can learn from Jacob's reaction in [37:34-35](#)?
- "The LORD was with Joseph..." ([39:2](#)). How is this a key to everything we are being told?
- Let's take the time to carefully read together what happened to Joseph in [39:2-10](#). What do we learn about him and what should we learn from him?
- Life doesn't get easier for Joseph after he does the right thing ([39:11-20](#)), "but the LORD was with Joseph" ([39:21](#)). What can we learn from those verses?
- What was the chief cupbearer's dream, and what did it mean ([40:9-15](#))? What was the chief baker's dream, and what did it mean ([40:16-19](#))?
- How would you summarize's Pharaoh's dreams in your own words ([41:1-8](#))?
- Notice what Joseph said to the cupbearer and the baker ([40:8](#)), and also to Pharaoh ([41:16](#)). What does that tell us about Joseph?
- What does Joseph firmly believe according to [41:25](#)?
- What names does Joseph give his two sons in [41:50-52](#)? Why?
- Thinking about [Genesis 37-41](#) in light of the big picture of God's revelation in *Genesis*... How does it fit? What is the ultimate point of the events as recorded in these five chapters?