

Joseph

Genesis 41: 38-45.

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"Royal robes shall soon invest Thee,
Royal splendours crown Thy brow."

The background to these verses in Genesis is graphic indeed. With regard to it we simply and briefly say that the fruit of Joseph having been in prison was that one man was removed in judgment and another brought into blessing. This reference is to the baker and the butler. In New Testament teaching we learn that the old man has been condemned in the Cross of Christ and that the new man has been created. Our links are with Christ risen and glorified. It has been aptly said, "the Cross was the doom of the old creation; the tomb was the womb of the New Creation; and the resurrection gives it birth."

Joseph had known suffering; he had known the treachery of his brethren; he had known imprisonment with its trials. He had, suggestively, suffered at the hands of Jews and Gentiles. However, in the ordering of God, the moment of exaltation had arrived. Hear the word of Pharaoh, "Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?" And to Joseph, "Thou shalt be over my house, and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled." The recognition of Joseph's wisdom, divinely endowed, was the cause of Pharaoh's pronouncement.

Let us transport our thoughts to the New Testament. John 3: 35, "The Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into His hand." With this in mind we recall (according to John 19: 1-3) that our Lord was cruelly maltreated and they put on Him a purple robe. They had robbed Him of His own garments — suggestive of the attack of Satan-inspired men against our Lord, robbing Him of the glory due to Him. The soldiers garbed Him with the purple robe in mockery. Both John and Mark, in their gospels, tell of the purple robe. John tells us in his first epistle that the Lord Jesus Christ is "the true God." Yet several times in John's gospel we read that He is the Son of Man. Psalm 8 teaches that this is the title of His universal supremacy. He who is ever co-equal and co-eternal in the Godhead has stooped down to become a Man and because of this the Father has committed all judgment to Him (John 5: 22, 27). He is competent, because of who He is, to fill the highest station, and though men garbed Him in cruel mockery, He shall yet wear the imperial purple. The day shall surely dawn, as prefigured in the history of Joseph, when He who has been down beneath all shall be exalted above all.

Mark also mentions the purple robe; his is the Gospel of the Perfect Servant. Certainly as we read Mark's Gospel we are constrained to say of our Lord, "He is the servant of all." And He has displayed in all His service His fitness for ruling. Though he said to the disciples, as they voiced their displeasure against John and James desiring chief places in the coming kingdom, "whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all." He also said, "For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10: 35-45). So He Himself exemplified the beautiful features of self-humbling which lead to exaltation. The wise man, Proverbs 30: 22, tells of three things by which the earth is disquieted, and first is "a servant when he reigneth." Position does not of itself confer fitness for it. In our blessed Lord we learn the beautiful marks that fit for righteous rule. The Servant of all shall be the Lord of all — "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him"!

Matthew, the gospel of the King, singles out the scarlet robe of human and royal glory. The robe

in which our Lord's tormentors arrayed Him mocked His title to the throne of Israel. Very early in Matthew's gospel the question was asked, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" The wise men came from the east to Jerusalem seeking the King. Our Lord Jesus Christ, made of the seed of David according to the flesh, was in the direct line of royal succession. The throne of the kingdom belonged to Him by right in virtue of His royal birth. At the close of His holy pathway we view Him crowned — but with a crown of thorns — 'twixt two malefactors, impaled upon a cross. This was His accusation, set above His head — "*This is Jesus the King of the Jews*".

Praise God, the once refused, despised and crucified [One], shall yet wear the royal robe of kingly glory. Israel, willing in the day of His power, shall welcome Him — "And it shall be said in that day, Lo this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us; this is the LORD; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" (Isaiah 25: 9). So shall He, who once was garbed in the mocking robe and crowned with the cruel crown, be acclaimed when God sets Him forth with the crown of pure gold upon His peerless brow. "He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne" (Zechariah 6: 13)

Luke is the gospel of the Perfect Man. There we are told He was arrayed with a gorgeous or splendid robe (Luke 23: 11). This word "gorgeous" is elsewhere (Revelation 15: 6 and 19: 8) translated "white." It means bright or shining. Surely we are right in suggesting that the white colour is the fit emblem of the unstained holiness and moral beauty of the life of our spotless Lord as He lived here in a sin-defiled world.

As we meditate upon these remarkable features presented in the various Gospels we see most clearly, although wicked men had no such perception of our adorable Lord, that He is eminently worthy to bear all that is suggested by these various colours.

Genesis 41. Pharaoh took off his ring — that ring which bore the royal cipher, his authoritative seal — and he put it on Joseph's hand. Then he arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and placed a chain of gold about his neck. Thus he indicated to all that Joseph was the man of his right hand, and so he distinguished him. The ring — speaks of authority; the fine linen — of moral worth; the gold chain — of sovereign majesty. We sometimes speak of the threefold glories of Christ — Personal, Moral and Official.

As to Personal glory — He has rights because of *WHO HE IS*. There were those who said He was the son of the carpenter. They spoke as though they knew all about Him, His family connections; His background; as though to say "He is only one of us"! There was something they did not know, lying outside of creature ken. For this divine revelation was essential, such as was given to Peter when he confessed, "Thou art the Son of the living God."

The fine linen — was figurative of our Lord's beautiful character witnessed in all His conduct, attesting His moral fitness for ruling. How delightful was that perfect life lived in devotion to the Father — a green spot, indeed, in the midst of the arid waste of man's rebellion against God. Even Pilate was compelled to acknowledge, "I find no fault in Him," and to cry plaintively, "Why, what evil hath He done?"

As to Official right — He is King of Israel. Psalm 2 lends its prophetic voice, "Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree; the LORD hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee."

Two things are said here of our Lord which emphasise to us the wonder of His Person,

1) "Thou art My Son." This is what the official King is in personal relationship. As to this, we are

faced with what is timeless.

2) "This day have I begotten Thee," carries us on to the Incarnation. Here we have a time expression — "This day."

Our Lord, coming into Manhood, brought with Him that timeless relationship in which He had ever been with the Father. And He is the King. Official glory belongs to Him. We may say, the truth of who He is lies behind every office which He fills.

We may also say that, while He has Personal, Moral, and Official rights to the throne, the New Testament clearly teaches — even as suggested in the history of Joseph — He has rights because of His suffering — He tasted death for everything (Hebrews 2: 9). He is now crowned with glory and with honour. The cross entitles Him to the crown.

In all that Pharaoh did for Joseph he was virtually saying, "the man who has been down to the bottom is now set at the top." Joseph rides forth and as he does so the cry rings out, "*bow the knee*". Our Lord was hailed in mockery: men bowed the knee to Him in scorn, but the Scripture declares that, "Every knee should bow . . . and every tongue should confess that He is Lord." He shall be greeted in the day of His manifestation with universal subjection and acclamation.

Joseph was also given a new name, Zaphnath-paaneah. As to its meaning there are several suggestions — Light of the world; Saviour of the world; Revealer of secrets. They were all true in Joseph's case. His revealing of the royal dreams gave light as to the true state of affairs in Egypt, and his wisdom brought practical salvation in the time of famine. Our Lord is the Light of the World and He has brought into it, in infinite grace, the revelation of the love of God. He is the Revealer of Secrets. He has brought to light the Father's heart. He has opened to us the Father's house with all the love, peace, joy and glory, that belong there. "The Father sent the Son, the Saviour of the world."

Certain in their day declared, ". . . this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Then Pharaoh gave Joseph a suited wife, Asenath, daughter of the priest, or prince of On. He received a consort, one equal to him in his position of exaltation, fit to share with him in the rule of Egypt. Turning to Ephesians 1 we read that God has set our Lord "at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1: 2-23).

Christ, the glorified Man, has a complement in the administration of the world to come. The mystery of God's will is that all things in heaven and on earth shall be headed up in Christ. Scripture teaches that there are two exceptions to universal subjection to Christ — "It is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him" (1 Cor. 15: 27); and in this passage in Ephesians 1 the church is distinct and distinguished from the all things. There is an organic union between Christ and the church — the union of the Head and His body. He is not here described as head over the church but *to* the church. And this denotes an affinity such as was typified in the Genesis account when God said, "Let *them* have dominion" (Gen. 1: 26); and "it is not good that the man should be alone, I will make him an help meet for him" (2: 18). The church, the body of Christ, is the help meet for Him, and the world dominion of the coming kingdom shall be shared with Him.

As we draw our simple consideration of these blessed features of the greater than Joseph to a close may we thank God for the grace which has been given us, as believing the gospel of our salvation, to be united to Christ by the Spirit. Praise God for the knowledge of the all varied glories of

our Lord Jesus Christ. Praise Him too for the knowledge that He is destined to universal supremacy. Praise Him for the blessing of our having "obtained an inheritance in Him." Pray too that the day of its realisation may hasten. In the meantime may we live as those who wait for their Lord.