Equipping The Saints

"...For the equipping of the saints for the work of service..." ~ Ephesians 4:12

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Zaphenathpaneah
Genesis 41:45
(By Andrew Dow)

The Bible is full of characters who instruct and encourage us by their examples. Zaphenathpaneah is one of these great men of faith with whom most of us are familiar. We have probably heard countless character studies based on his life and circumstances. We often make a diligent effort to tell our children the extraordinary stories in which he played a part. He truly plays a crucial role in God's scheme of redemption.

While everything you just read about Zaphenathpaneah is true, you may not recognize him by that name. You see, Zaphenathpaneah is more commonly known to us as Joseph. In fact, Joseph is only referred to as Zaphenathpaneah once in the entire Bible. In this article, I'd like to notice the significance of Joseph's other name: Zaphenathpaneah.

The Life of Joseph

Allow me to remind you of a few highlights from Joseph's life. First, Jacob **"loved Joseph more than all his sons"** (Gen. 37:3, NASB). Scripture records that Joseph's **"brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they hated him"** (Gen. 37:4). As a result of this hatred, they sold Joseph into slavery (Gen. 37:18-35).

Second, Joseph found himself in Egypt as Potiphar's servant (Gen. 37:36). The text states that **"the Lord was with Joseph, so he became a successful man"** (Gen. 39:2). In fact, the Lord **"blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph"** (Gen. 39:5). It is while Joseph is in Potiphar's house that we see Joseph's love for God. When Potiphar's wife attempted to seduce Joseph, his response was powerful—**"How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?"** (Gen 39:8-9). Unfortunately, due to the lies of Potiphar's wife, Joseph was imprisoned (Gen. 39:20).

Finally, when Joseph was put in jail, we find that **"the Lord was with Joseph and extended kindness to him… the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made to prosper"** (Gen. 39:20-23). At some point, Pharaoh put two of his servants in prison (Gen. 40:1-4). One night each servant had a puzzling dream. Joseph said to them, **"Do not interpretations belong to God?"** (Gen. 40:8). Joseph interpreted their dreams and they came to pass just as Joseph had said. A couple of years later Joseph had the opportunity to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh himself. The ruler of all Egypt spoke to Joseph and said, "**I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it**" (Gen. 41:15). Joseph humbly replied, "**It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer**" (Gen. 41:16). All that Joseph had said "**seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his servants**" (Gen. 41:37).

An Egyptian Name

Until this point, Joseph's life had been like a roller coaster. He had undoubtedly experienced great joy and exceptional heartache. However, following the interpretation of his dream, Pharaoh gave Joseph an unparalleled honor. **"So Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Since God has informed you of all this, there is no**

one so discerning and wise as you are. You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you… See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt'" (Gen. 41:39-41).

In order to give him this high position, Pharaoh needed to thoroughly Egyptianize Joseph (Gen. 41:42-45). during this process, we are told that Pharaoh gave Joseph an Egyptian name: "**Then Pharaoh named Joseph Zaphenathpaneah**" (Gen. 41:45).

Some Egyptologists have suggested that Zaphenathpaneah likely meant, "*God speaks, he lives*." I suppose Pharaoh could have given Joseph any number of names, but he chose to call him by a name that recognized that God speaks and that God lives. What a wonderful testament to the life of Joseph!

God's presence is behind everything that happened to Joseph. The very fact that Joseph was given life was due to God remembering Rachel (Gen. 30:22). When he was brought to Egypt God was blessing Joseph (Gen. 39:5). When tempted by Potiphar's wife Joseph refused to sin against God (Gen. 39:8-9). When given opportunities to interpret dreams, Joseph always gave credit to God (Gen. 40:8; 41:15-16). Throughout Joseph's life he emphasized God rather than himself. As a result, even the king of Egypt recognized that "God speaks, he lives."

Application

Each one of us encounters various people everyday. If given the opportunity, what would they rename us? Would they name us, "Rude," "Hypocrite," or "Stuck-up?" Or would they recognize that we belong to God? Brethren, live so that people look at us and say, "Zaphenathpaneah! God speaks, He lives!" ~

"We are the only Bible the careless world will read,
We are the sinner's gospel, We are the scoffer's creed;
We are the Lord's last message given in deed and word,
What if the type is crooked? What if they print is blurred?"

~Annie J. Flint

Notes:

AM Lesson:

Praying Like Jesus

PM Lesson:

Immorality Among You
(1 Corinthians 5-6)

"Go therefore and make disciples..." (Matthew 28:19-20)