

A PRELUDE TO *BIBLICAL* EVANGELISM

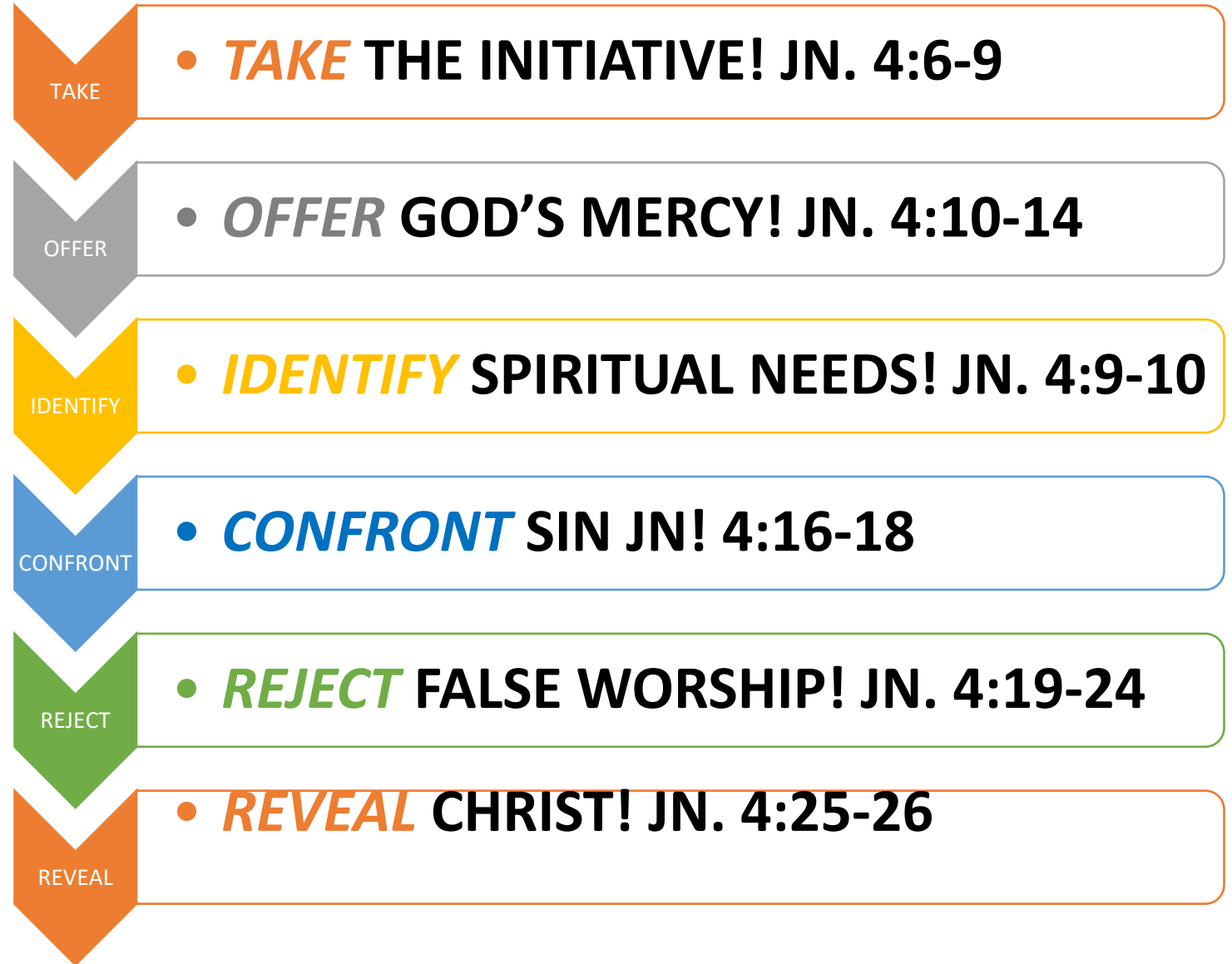


A large, ancient tree with thick, gnarled roots growing over stone ruins. The tree's roots are massive and spread out over the ground and the ruins. The background shows more ruins and lush green foliage.

THE FRUIT OF
THE RIGHTEOUS IS A
TREE OF LIFE,
AND HE WHO IS WISE
WINS SOULS.

PROVERBS 11:30 NASB

PRINCIPLES
FOR
BIBLICAL
EVANGELISM
FOUND IN
JOHN 4, “THE
WOMAN AT
THE WELL.”



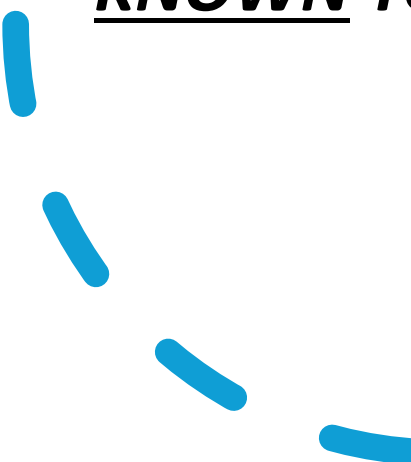
Profiles *of* Godliness

JOSEPH + THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

- JOSEPH, GOD'S *SOVEREIGNTY* IN OUR TRIALS.
- THE RIGHT *PERSPECTIVE*
- GOD'S DIVINE *PURPOSES*
- A **FALSE** ACCUSATION
- JOSEPH: THE *PRECISION* OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

- **CLEARLY, GOD HAD ORCHESTRATED JOSEPH'S PAST EXPERIENCES AND TRIALS FOR THAT MOMENT.** If **HIS BROTHERS** had not sold him into slavery, he would not have been brought down to Egypt. **IF POTIPHAR** had not purchased him from the slave market, he would not have gained the experience he needed to manage people and commodities within an Egyptian context. **IF HE HAD NOT BEEN FALSELY ACCUSED** and sent to prison, he would not have interpreted the cupbearer's dream. And if that had not happened, he would not have been summoned by the Pharaoh on this divinely appointed day. **HIS RESPONSIBILITIES IN POTIPHAR'S HOUSE AND IN THE JAILHOUSE PREPARED HIM FOR HIS NEW ROLE IN PHARAOH'S HOUSE.**
- **THE LORD HAD OVERSEEN ALL THOSE EVENTS TO BRING HIM** to this one moment—when **JOSEPH** would be ready to organize a national food drive, saving millions from starvation. **PHARAOH RECOGNIZED GOD'S HAND ON JOSEPH** and **IMMEDIATELY KNEW THE FORMER PRISONER SHOULD RUN THE FOOD-GATHERING OPERATIONS FOR HIS EMPIRE.**

- **JOSEPH'S LIFE** is an important reminder for each of us: **THERE ARE NO ACCIDENTS**. As the Author of history, **THE LORD ORCHESTRATES** all events to bring about **HIS WILL**. In triumph as well as tragedy, He directs our steps to put us where and when He wants us for His sovereign purposes. And while we may not experience the radical ups and downs of Joseph's life, **WE CAN REST IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT EVEN THE MOST INSIGNIFICANT EVENT IS A DIVINE APPOINTMENT IN THE HANDS OF THE LORD**.
- That truth is dramatically displayed in Joseph's story. In one day, his fortunes had been completely reversed. That morning, he woke up in his prison cell. By evening, he went to sleep in the palace. **Thirteen years earlier**, he came to Egypt as a lowly **SLAVE**, but now, at the age of **thirty**, he had become the **SECOND-MOST-POWERFUL RULER** in the land. None of it was coincidence—**THE LORD WAS IN CONTROL** at every turn, and **HIS SOVEREIGN PLAN** was not yet fully revealed.

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- Undoubtedly, even at this time of **EXALTATION**, **JOSEPH** still wondered about his father and his brothers back in Canaan. What would they think if they could see him now? And what of the dreams God had given him when he was still at home? The Lord had revealed to him the meaning of other people's visions. **BUT WHAT ABOUT HIS OWN?**
 - It would be several years before the Lord would make **HIS TRUE PURPOSES KNOWN TO JOSEPH.**

JOSEPH: HIS *ROLE* IN A BIGGER STORY

- *JOSEPH'S* sudden and shocking promotion to the right hand of Pharaoh was neither *KARMA* nor *COMPENSATION*. The betrayal of his brothers, the indignity of slavery, and the injustice of his imprisonment were *ALL EXPERIENCES ORDAINED BY GOD IN PREPARATION FOR A MONUMENTAL RESCUE OPERATION*.

ABUNDANT BLESSING

- During Egypt's *seven years of abundance*, **JOSEPH** was busy organizing the collection and storage of grain in all the cities throughout Egypt. His efforts were so successful that it became impossible to keep an accurate count of the entire supply.
- It was also during this time that **JOSEPH GOT MARRIED** and started a family. Joseph declared God's goodness to him in the names of his two sons. He named his firstborn **MANASSEH**, which means **FORGETFUL**. Joseph explained that the name meant, **"GOD HAS MADE ME FORGET ALL MY TROUBLE AND ALL MY FATHER'S HOUSEHOLD"** (GEN. 41:51). He named his younger son **EPHRAIM**, meaning **FRUITFUL**. Again, he explained, **"GOD HAS MADE ME FRUITFUL IN THE LAND OF MY AFFLICTION"** (GEN. 41:52).

GOD AT THE CENTER

- Despite all that **JOSEPH ENDURED**, God was still at the center of his thinking. **THE LORD ENABLED HIM TO PUT THE PAIN OF HIS PAST BEHIND HIM AND TO ENJOY BLESSINGS IN THE VERY PLACE WHERE HE HAD ENDURED SO MANY TRIALS.** Though Egypt was about to experience a **GREAT FAMINE**, Joseph was enjoying **GREAT ABUNDANCE**.
- When the good years of harvest ended and the famine began, Joseph's diligent preparations paid off. Not only were the Egyptians spared from mass starvation, but multitudes of people suffering famine in the surrounding regions came to Egypt to buy food (**GEN. 41:57**)—including **JOSEPH'S BROTHERS**. Twenty years after they sold their brother into slavery, **JACOB'S TEN OLDEST SONS** made the same trek to Egypt that Joseph had been forced to make long ago.

- ***GOD HAD ALLOWED JOSEPH TO ENDURE SO MUCH*** so that, through his efforts, ***JACOB'S FAMILY*** might be ***RESCUED*** from famine and brought to a place where they could grow into a large nation. It was all part of fulfilling the promise the Lord made with ***ABRAHAM*** three generations earlier (***GEN. 15:13–14***). In an ironic turn of ***DIVINE PROVIDENCE***, ***JOSEPH'S BROTHERS*** came to Egypt in order to ***AVOID DEATH*** and would be ***RESCUED*** by the very person they sought to kill two decades earlier.
- That irony was not lost on ***JOSEPH***. He could see the Lord's hand of providence in their earlier actions. ***HE UNDERSTOOD THAT GOD WAS USING HIM TO PRESERVE HIS FAMILY AND TO BRING THEM DOWN TO EGYPT. EVERYTHING WAS ACCORDING TO THE LORD'S WILL.*** Listen to the God-centered theology that undergirded Joseph's thinking as he comforted his brothers with these words:

“I AM YOUR BROTHER JOSEPH, WHOM YOU SOLD INTO EGYPT. NOW DO NOT BE GRIEVED OR ANGRY WITH YOURSELVES, BECAUSE YOU SOLD ME HERE, FOR GOD SENT ME BEFORE YOU TO PRESERVE LIFE. FOR THE FAMINE HAS BEEN IN THE LAND THESE TWO YEARS, AND THERE ARE STILL FIVE YEARS IN WHICH THERE WILL BE NEITHER PLOWING NOR HARVESTING. GOD SENT ME BEFORE YOU TO PRESERVE FOR YOU A REMNANT IN THE EARTH, AND TO KEEP YOU ALIVE BY A GREAT DELIVERANCE. NOW, THEREFORE, IT WAS NOT YOU WHO SENT ME HERE, BUT GOD; AND HE HAS MADE ME A FATHER TO PHARAOH AND LORD OF ALL HIS HOUSEHOLD AND RULER OVER ALL THE LAND OF EGYPT.” (GEN. 45:4–8)



• *Three times, **JOSEPH** EMPHASIZED THAT **GOD'S HAND** WAS BEHIND IT ALL. **JOSEPH** was not **EXCUSING HIS BROTHERS' SIN**—he was emphasizing the fact that **THE LORD USES EVEN THE WICKED CHOICES OF SINFUL PEOPLE TO ACCOMPLISH HIS SOVEREIGN PURPOSES**. Because God sent Joseph to Egypt, Jacob and his entire family were saved from a famine that could have wiped out the budding **NATION OF ISRAEL**.*



THE *MOVE* TO EGYPT

- *WHEN JACOB* heard the news that his beloved son *JOSEPH* was still alive, he initially *did not believe* it (**GEN. 45:26**). He was already *130 years old*, but he eagerly readied himself for a journey to Egypt to see his long-lost son. As he travelled, *GOD APPEARED TO HIM IN A VISION* and reiterated the fact that this was all part of His design to fulfill His *COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM*.
- THE *LORD* TOLD JACOB, *“I AM GOD, THE GOD OF YOUR FATHER; DO NOT BE AFRAID TO GO DOWN TO EGYPT, FOR I WILL MAKE YOU A GREAT NATION THERE”* (**GEN. 46:3; GEN. 12:1–3**).

- **PHARAOH** gladly received **JOSEPH'S FATHER AND BROTHERS** and offered them the best land in Egypt—a region called **GOSHEN**. There they were able to establish their families, raise their livestock, and thrive. **JACOB** lived another **seventeen years** in Egypt and died at the age of **147**. Over the next **four hundred and fifty years**, **ISRAEL** went from a family of **seventy** to a **NATION** of nearly **two million**—large enough to take over the Promised Land. Looking back, we can see what **JOSEPH COULDN'T**—through him, the **LORD SET IN MOTION EVENTS THAT WOULD SHAPE THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL, CULMINATING IN THE SACRIFICE OF HIS SON.**

GOD IS STILL SOVEREIGN

- Although **JOSEPH'S CIRCUMSTANCES** and his place in redemptive history were unique to him, **HIS PERSPECTIVE** is one that all believers ought to emulate. **THE GOD WHO SUPERINTENDED THE EVENTS OF GENESIS 37–50 STILL SITS ON THE THRONE OF THE UNIVERSE.**
- **HE WAS SOVEREIGN** over the circumstances of **JOSEPH'S LIFE**, and **HE IS SOVEREIGN OVER OUR CIRCUMSTANCES TOO**. We may not always *understand* what is happening around us, but like **JOSEPH**, **WE CAN REST CONFIDENTLY IN THE FACT THAT THE LORD IS NOT ONLY IN CONTROL BUT USING THAT CONTROL TO FURTHER HIS PLANS.**

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- ***THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE***, the ***THEME*** of ***GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY*** is repeatedly presented as a ***COMFORT TO BELIEVERS***. We need be anxious for nothing because our ***HEAVENLY FATHER REIGNS OVERALL***.
 - ***HE IS ALL-POWERFUL, ALL-WISE, AND ALL-PRESENT***, and ***HE HAS PROMISED TO WORK ALL THINGS TOGETHER FOR HIS GLORY AND OUR GOOD*** (ROM. 8:28). ***WE HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR*** because if God is for us, who can be against us (ROM. 8:31)?
 - ***NO ONE CAN OPPOSE HIS WILL, AND NOTHING CAN THWART HIS PLANS*** (ISA. 14:27).

- As these verses—and a host of others—show, the Bible is explicit in its depiction of **GOD'S SOVEREIGN CONTROL OVER ALL THINGS**.
- **JOSEPH'S EXAMPLE** reminds us that ***"OUR GOD IS IN THE HEAVENS; HE DOES WHATEVER HE PLEASES"*** (PSA. 115:3). That means **WE CAN TRUST HIM** and wholly rest in the reality that **HE IS ON HIS THRONE**. Embracing that kind of perspective won't take our trials away, but it will enable us to find joy and peace in the midst of them (JAM. 1:2–4). Thus, even when others hurt us or life seems difficult and unfair, we can triumphantly declare with **JOSEPH**, ***"AS FOR YOU, YOU MEANT EVIL AGAINST ME, BUT GOD MEANT IT FOR GOOD"*** (GENESIS 50:20).