

Genesis 41:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?

Analysis

And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of G... This passage is part of the Joseph narrative, a masterfully crafted account demonstrating God's sovereign providence working through human choices and circumstances to accomplish His redemptive purposes. The Joseph cycle shows how God transforms evil intentions into instruments of salvation.

Central themes include divine providence orchestrating events toward redemptive ends, the testing and refinement of character through suffering and success, forgiveness overcoming betrayal and injustice, and the preservation of God's covenant people through famine. Joseph's rise from slavery to second-in-command of Egypt illustrates how God exalts the humble and uses seeming disasters for ultimate good.

Theologically, these chapters reveal:

1. God's meticulous sovereignty over all events, even evil human actions
2. suffering as preparation for future service rather than punishment
3. forgiveness as reflecting divine character and enabling reconciliation
4. God's covenant faithfulness across generations ensuring the survival and blessing of His people
5. how present suffering gains meaning when viewed from the perspective of God's larger purposes.

Joseph's words "you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (50:20) epitomize biblical theodicy and providence.

Historical Context

The patriarchal narratives (Genesis 12-50) reflect the cultural, social, and legal customs of the ancient Near East during the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1500 BCE). Archaeological discoveries including the Mari tablets, Nuzi tablets, and Egyptian records confirm many details: nomadic pastoralism, covenant-making ceremonies, marriage customs, property laws, and international travel patterns described in Genesis.

The cultural practices reflected include: treaty/covenant forms (Genesis 15), bride-price customs (Genesis 24, 29), inheritance laws favoring firstborn sons (Genesis 25, 27), adoption practices (Genesis 15, 30), levirate-type arrangements (Genesis 38), and Egyptian administrative systems (Genesis 41, 47). These parallels confirm Genesis's historical reliability while showing how God worked within ancient cultural frameworks to accomplish His purposes.

For later Israelites, these narratives established their identity as Abraham's descendants, explained their claim to Canaan, justified their possession of Joseph's bones (Exodus 13:19), and provided models of faith despite imperfection. The patriarchs' failures and God's faithfulness encouraged Israel that covenant relationship depended on God's grace rather than human merit. The movement from Mesopotamia to Canaan to Egypt set the stage for the Exodus and conquest narratives.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does understanding this verse shape our doctrine of humanity, sin, or salvation?
2. What specific changes in thinking or behavior does this verse call us to make?
3. How does this passage point forward to Christ and the gospel of redemption?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר	פַּרְעֹה ה	אֶל	עֲבָדָיו	הֲנִמְצָא	כֵּן ה
said	And Pharaoh	H413	unto his servants	Can we find	such a one as this
H559	H6547		H5650	H4672	H2088
אִישׁ	אֲשֶׁר	רִיחַ	אֱלֹהִים יִם	בּוֹ:	
is a man	in whom	the Spirit	of God	H0	
H376	H834	H7307	H430		

Additional Cross-References

Job 32:8 (Spirit): But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.

Numbers 27:18 (Spirit): And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him;

Daniel 5:14 (Spirit): I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee.

Daniel 5:11 (Spirit): There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers;

Daniel 4:18 (Spirit): This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise men of

my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou art able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee.

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