

Joseph—Genesis 40

Dreams of the Butler and Baker

I. Additional Scriptures...

1. Solomon had cupbearers (1 Kgs 10:5).
2. Nehemiah was a cupbearer (Neh 1:11b).
3. Joseph gave God the credit for interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams (Gen 41:16).
4. Jesus said doing for others is doing for Him (Mt 25:40).

II. Chronology.

Bible Period: **Patriarchy.**

Evidently Joseph spent about 2 years in Potiphar's household. He will spend about 11 years in prison and this is the period with which this chapter deals. Next there will be 7 years of plenty in which Joseph will produce two children (41:1-52); then comes 7 years of famine (41:53—47:26) when the brothers of Joseph arrive in Egypt in search of food (41:53—47:26). Jacob arrives during this period of famine and lives for 17 more years. The sojourn in Goshen, part of Egypt, lasted about 70 years (47:27—50:26). [This chronology data is from Chart #15 in James E. Smith's, *The Pentateuch*].

III. Summary.

One of the “perks” of being imprisoned in the particular prison into which Joseph had been placed was that of being confined with men who had been in close quarters with the man in control of the entire land of Egypt, the Pharaoh. In this chapter Joseph meets Pharaoh's butler and baker. Nothing is told us about what had caused Pharaoh's wrath against these two, but they did wind up in the same place where Joseph was confined. For a period of time these two were placed under Joseph's charge.

In the same night both the butler and baker dreamed dreams and Joseph noticed their sad countenances and inquired about what was troubling them. They mentioned their dreams and Joseph suggested that God might, through him, interpret their dreams. The butler's dream was interpreted by Joseph to mean that within three days he would be restored to his former position. Having confidence that the dream would be fulfilled, Joseph asked the butler to remember him when he returned to serve Pharaoh, desiring that the injustice of his own imprisonment might be corrected. The chief baker's dream was not nearly so rosy. Joseph told him that within three days Pharaoh would cut off his head, hanging him on a tree, and allowing the birds to eat his flesh.

Pharaoh released the two servants on his birthday, restoring the chief butler and he bore the cup for Pharaoh again; but, the baker was hanged just as Joseph had earlier stated in his interpretation of the dream. Sadly, the butler did not remember his promise to remember Joseph.

IV. Outline.

1. The butler and baker of the Pharaoh are imprisoned and placed under the care of Joseph (1-4).
2. An unusual sadness of the butler and baker were observed by Joseph and Joseph learns they both have dreamed dreams (5-8).

3. Joseph asks to hear the dreams and perhaps God would give the interpretation of them (8b).
4. The butler's dream is told and interpreted with happy ending (9-13).
5. Joseph asks to be remembered by the butler at the time of his restoration (14).
6. The baker's dream is told and interpreted with a sad ending (15-19).
7. The dreams of both of the servants were fulfilled as Joseph had interpreted them (20-22).
8. The butler forgot his promise to Joseph (23).

V. Questions.

True or False

01. _____ Pharaoh had more than one butler.
02. _____ The chief butler forgot Joseph.
03. _____ Joseph served the butler and baker in prison.
04. _____ Having no interpreter for their dreams made both the butler and baker sad.
05. _____ The dreams of the butler and baker had nothing in common.

Multiple Choice (Select the BEST Answer)

06. _____ The chief baker and the chief butler had: (a) offended; (b) cheated; (c) lied to, the king of Egypt.
07. _____ On Pharaoh's birthday, the chief baker was: (a) given his old job back; (b) hanged; (c) neither a nor b.
08. _____ The butler's dream involved: (a) birds; (b) ripe grapes; (c) a cup; (d) b & c; (e) a & b.
09. _____ The birds in the baker's dream were a favorable symbol regarding his service to the Pharaoh in the future: (a) YES; (b) NO.
10. _____ The butler was asked to show: (a) kindness; (b) respect; (c) honor.

Fill in the Blanks

11. Joseph wanted the butler to appeal to the Pharaoh on his behalf because he had been _____ away from the land of the Hebrews and he had done _____ that he should be put into the _____.
12. Similar in role to one of the characters of this chapter, and one of the demonstrations of Solomon's great wealth and power seen by the Queen of Sheba in her visit to Israel, was Solomon's _____.
13. "And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: _____ shall give Pharaoh an _____ of peace" (Gen 41:_____).
14. As a part of Nehemiah's prayer to the Lord, he said, "...For I was the _____."
15. "But he _____ the chief baker: as _____ had interpreted to them" (Gen 40: _____).

Each Question is worth 7 Points

My Score is: _____

Answers will be given on next week's handout

Last Week's Answers, Lesson 01-02: [01--False, 36; 02--False, 17; 03--False, 34; 04--True, 22; 05--True, 25; 06--b, 14; 07--c, 31; 08--a, 15; 09--b, 26-27; 10--c, Ps 5:6; 11--deliver, thirty, silver, Mt 26:15; 12--Romans, deceit; 13--19, dreamer; 14--25, eat bread, Ishmeelites, balm; 15--29, Reuben, rent].

VI. Lessons & Applications.

1. *...had offended their lord the king of Egypt* (v. 1). Here we see the kind of circumstances under which Joseph is now living. There is one man who has the power in Egypt and any offense to him can mean a trip to the dungeon. Think about how different these circumstances are for Joseph than the way he had it back at home in his father's house.
2. *And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them...*(v. 4). One of the many remarkable characteristics of Joseph was that he was quite willing to be a servant. His true attitude of humble service is seen in that he was careful to observe the sadness of these two prisoners and sought to do what he could to cheer them up (v. 7ff). Our Lord has told us that the greatest in the kingdom is the servant (Mt 23:11-12). So, once again, Joseph shows himself to be a worthy role model.
3. *...Do not interpretations belong to God?...*(v. 8). Here in a land of polytheism, Joseph is bold to speak of and recommend his God, the one true and living God. Many having suffered as Joseph had would begin to blame God and forsake Him, not so with Joseph! He knew God was still God even in Egypt. What a remarkable faith Joseph had! What a lesson to us, as well. How appropriate it would be for every Christian to bring God into the conversations they have with their day-to-day associates. Would not this be a key in helping the church to grow? Remember Paul's wonderful statement (Rom 1:16).
4. *But think on me when it shall be well with thee...*(v. 14). Lest we get the picture that Joseph's life in prison was a "picnic," we are told here plainly that Joseph **wants out of that prison!** He asks a simple favor of the one to whom he had been a blessing. His statement reminds us of our own need to remember the less fortunate as we enjoy great prosperity and comfort. How often do we act in similar fashion to the forgetful butler (v. 23)? Our Lord has richly blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ (Eph 1:3), can we not see the need to remember those who are not enjoying such blessing?
5. *...and show kindness, I pray thee, unto me,...* (v. 14). Joseph here makes a simple plea for kindness. Kindness seems to have become a lost art in our modern society, however, for those who follow the word of the Lord, it must not be so (cf., Rom 12:10; 1 Cor 13:4; Eph 4:32; Col 3:12; 1 Pt 1:5-7; et.al.).
6. *For indeed I was stolen away...*(v. 15). Joseph was fully aware of the evil treatment he had received. The remarkable thing with him was that he did not dwell on those matters. His behavior shows us how to deal with adversity. We think of the patience of Job (James 5:11), but this young man showed great patience and endurance himself. Paul's statement well describes the reaction of Joseph to the suffering he had faced in the past (Ph 3:13).
7. *Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee* (v. 19). How easy would it have been for Joseph to change up the true interpretation of this dream to make the baker feel better about it. After all, he was seeking to change their sadness into gladness was he not (vv. 8-9). Joseph could not change the message because the message came from God (v. 8). Even though it was not what the baker wanted to hear, Joseph faithfully delivered the message. This is the task of every Christian with regard to the lost state of our friends, neighbors, and relatives (Mark 16:15-16; 2 Tim 2:2).
8. *But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them* (v. 23). This statement will become of great importance a bit in the future when **finally** the butler remembers more about the circumstances of his confinement and the dream that he had. It will be of great significance in the future of Joseph and of his family!

9. *Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him* (v. 23). Sounds like so many who receive blessings but fail to be thankful for them. "Where are the nine?", Jesus asks (cf., Luke 17:12-17).

VIII. Seek-A-Word Puzzle.

Q H E A D I G Q A B A A C G B I R D S B
W V Z B N U B A Z U Z B A S K E T S H R
E B X V H J V C X D X Z V H P W P W J U
R B C C Y K F V C D S X B J O E C E K P
T L D X T H D Y V E W C N C U P B F O P
Y O E Z G B E U B D E G M U J T K V P E
U S R A C L U S T E R S J G G Y R C P R
I S B Q B K S A N D R F K F G V T D O M
O O F R V M A S M A F T J E F U I E P O
P M V E A N W H I T E R H S E B D N R S
L S P R F N Q B A K E M E A T S S R E T
K B H T R B C D L Z B T G S S V A T S P
J M A Y E E Z H K X J Y F R I P E Y S I
H N R U D A X R E C H U T T F T O H E K
G B A I C T C V J S R I H G G R W B D J
F V O I X B A G G V T P R V B E S V S H
D C H P T V S T F B G O E C H S X F R G
S X V O S C D Y T H R E E X J A V R T R
A Z H K W X F H D N B K A G R A P E S C
A S B M S Z V N S M N J W Z K H A N D T

[The words below are from the dreams and interpretations found in this chapter. See if you can find them above. One word is listed twice and can be found twice above.]

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|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| 01. vine | 02. three | 03. branches |
| 04. budded | 05. blossoms | 06. shot |
| 07. clusters | 08. ripe | 09. grapes |
| 10. pressed | 11. cup | 12. hand |
| 13. three | 14. white | 15. baskets |
| 16. head | 17. uppermost | 18. bakemeats |
| 19. Pharaoh | 20. birds | 21. eat |