

Genesis 40-41

April 3, 2011

Introduction:

We begin today's story in *chapter 40 of Genesis*. Joseph had been sold as a slave to Potiphar, whose wife had lied about Joseph, claiming that he tried to rape her. Joseph was now in the king's jail, but God was still "with him" and blessing him even there. The chief jailer has Joseph supervising the jail and its prisoners (39:21-23).

40:1-4: What takes place in chapter 40 verses 1 to 4?

- Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker both offend the king and are thrown into the same prison as Joseph.

What do you notice to be unusual about verse 4?

- The "captain of the bodyguard" who is over this jail and the chief jailer is Potiphar! See 39:1. First the chief jailer realizes Joseph's character and giftedness and puts him over the jail and *then* Potiphar puts Joseph in charge of the king's two servants.

Here again we see God blessing Joseph's life, even though Joseph was in jail. God is with Joseph and he gains favor with the chief jailer and then again with Potiphar. All that he does gets blessed.

Would we think that God was with us and that we were blessed if we were in jail? Why or why not?

- Many think that God being with them is the absence of problems and the presence of everything that we want. They think of God using them as being where *they* want to be doing what *they* want to do rather than being where God wants them to be doing what He wants them to do.

Is it possible to be in the center of God's will and to be somewhere that you don't want to be doing something that you don't want to be doing?

- This is true of Joseph. He did not want to be betrayed by his brothers, sold as a slave, lied about by Potiphar's wife, or thrown in jail. Joseph, the one to whom the sun, moon, and stars were to bow down to, surely didn't see himself using his "gifts" as a slave or as an inmate. But as we will see, Joseph is exactly where God wants him to be doing exactly what God wants him to be doing.

40:4-23: What happens in verses 4 to 23?

- The cupbearer and the baker both have dreams on the same night. The next day they are looking confused and depressed. Joseph asks why they are acting as they are and they tell him that they had dreams but do not know how to interpret those dreams. Joseph replies that God knows the interpretation and asks them to relate their dreams to him.
- Joseph tells the cupbearer that in three days he will be restored to his job as the king's cupbearer. He asks the cupbearer to remember him and to tell the Pharaoh that he is unjustly imprisoned.
- Joseph then tells the baker that in three days he will be executed (hung from a tree) by the Pharaoh.
- The Pharaoh has a birthday three days later and he restores the cupbearer and executes the baker, just as Joseph said that he would do. The cupbearer, though, forgot about Joseph and did not tell the Pharaoh about his unjust imprisonment.

Did Joseph consider himself a dream interpreter specialist?

- No. But he did know that God knew what those dreams meant (40:8).

Do you think that the baker would have asked for Joseph's interpretation if the cupbearer was going to be executed?

- Many people would rather be ignorant than know the truth. For example, some people don't go to the doctor because they are afraid of what he might say about their condition (cancer, need surgery, etc.). The truth about their condition is true whether they want to hear it or not. Avoiding the doctor never cures cancer.

If there is some “bad” news that affects your life, do you want to hear it or do you avoid it? And why?

- See what you get.

41:1-8: What takes place in chapter 41 verses 1 to 8?

- Pharaoh has two dreams. In the first dream seven skinny cows eat seven fat cows. In the second dream seven thin ears of corn eat seven plump ears of corn. Pharaoh wakes up and gathers all of his magicians and wise men in to interpret the dreams; none of them could do so.

41:9-13: In verses 9 to 13 the cupbearer tells Pharaoh about Joseph and his ability to interpret dreams.

41:14-24: In verses 14 to 24 Pharaoh tells Joseph about his dreams.

41:25-32: How does Joseph interpret the dreams in verses 25 to 32?

- Both dreams are about the same thing. The seven fat cows and plump ears of corn represent seven years of abundance in Egypt. The seven thin cows and thin ears of corn represent seven years of famine that will follow the seven years of abundance.

41:33-37: How does Joseph advise Pharaoh in verses 33 to 37?

- Joseph tells the king to appoint someone to collect a fifth of the produce during the seven years of plenty to store for food during the seven years of famine. Everyone recognized this idea as a good plan.

41:38-45: What happens in verses 38 to 45?

- Pharaoh appoints Joseph to be second in command in Egypt; he will oversee the collection of food for the famine. All of Egypt bows before Joseph. He is given full authority over everything in Egypt (41:44). Pharaoh also gives him an Egyptian wife.

41:46-49: What takes place in verses 46 to 49?

- Joseph masterfully collects and stores food during the seven years of plenty in Egypt.

How old was Joseph when he became Prime Minister of Egypt?

- 30 years old (41:46).

How old was Joseph when he was sold as a slave?

- 17 years old (37:2).

What might we learn from this?

- We are always in a hurry; God never is. God is concerned with timing (Galatians 4:4-5) but not time (2 Peter 3:8). We just want to get to the destination; God wants to use the “journey” to accomplish His purpose in our lives.

Why do you think that God had Joseph in slavery and in jail for all of those years?

- If you recall, Joseph grew up as the favored son (37:3-4). He also had dreams about his parents and brothers bowing down to him (37:5-11). Joseph likely was a very proud and spoiled young man. Thirteen years of disappointment, slavery, betrayal, jail, and being forgotten had clearly humbled Joseph. He gave God the credit for the dreams (40:8 & 41:25).

What might we learn about leaders and leadership from Joseph's story?

- Leadership position and prominence can make proud and ruin someone not mature enough to handle them.
- Leaders are to be tested (1 Timothy 3:2-13). They cannot be new converts (1 Timothy 3:6).
- The New Testament leaders were told not to lay hands on anyone too hastily (1 Timothy 5:22).
- To be a good leader, one must learn first how to be a good follower.
- Joseph learned this as a slave and inmate.
- To be good at being "over" you need to be good at being "under".
- Bad followers make bad leaders; those who are willing to follow and *not* be "in charge" make the best leaders.

See **Proverbs 11:2, 16:18, and 29:23.** See **Luke 14:11.** See **1 Peter 5:5-6.** **Proverbs 11:2, Pride leads to disgrace, 16:18, Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall. But with humility comes wisdom. Proverbs: 29: 23; Pride ends in humiliation, while humility brings honor. Luke 14:11. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." 1 Peter 5:5-6; in the same way, you younger men must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you serve each other in humility, for "God opposes the proud but favors the humble." 6 So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. NLT**

- God used the "valley" (slavery, jail) to prepare Joseph for the mountaintop (Prime Minister of Egypt). Joseph would not have been the right man at the "destination" (ruling) had it not been for the difficult, humbling journey (13 years as a "nobody").
- Never underestimate or despise your place in the journey when you are trusting God and walking with Him.

41:50-57: Who can tell us what takes place in verses 50 to 57?

- Joseph has two sons and stores up the food during the seven years of plenty?

What did the names of Joseph's sons mean?

- **Manasseh** (*muh-NASS-uh*) means, "making me forget" (41:51). Joseph left the bad times behind and embraced his new life. **Ephraim** (*eff-Ray-um*) means "fruitfulness" (41:52). Joseph enjoyed God's blessing on his life.