

Genesis 40:16-23 and 41:1-44

Genesis 40:2-3 "And Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers.

3: And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound."

We don't know why the butler and the baker were imprisoned.

However, since they were responsible for the quality and safety of Pharaoh's food and drink, their charges were probably related to some irregularities in that area.

Perhaps poison had been discovered in the palace, and these men were suspected in a plot to assassinate Pharaoh.

So they ended up in the very prison that Joseph was in charge of to await their fate.

V 5 **"And they dreamed a dream both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which were bound in the prison."**

No doubt they were convinced that their dreams were a message from the gods, a communication that would enlighten them concerning their rather uncertain future.

Had they been free, they most certainly would have consulted the wisemen and

magicians in Pharaoh's court, but being stuck in prison, they were left to wonder about their future.

The next morning when Joseph came in to see how they were doing, he was surprised and concerned by their downcast looks. Years of hardship had made him a most considerate man, and a man who was always ready to witness for his Lord.

V 8-15 **"And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you.**

9: And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, In my dream, behold, a vine was before me;

10: And in the vine were three branches: and it was as though it

budded, and her blossoms shot forth;
and the clusters thereof brought forth
ripe grapes:

11: And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand:
and I took the grapes, and pressed them
into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup
into Pharaoh's hand.

12: And Joseph said unto him, This is
the interpretation of it: The three
branches are three days:

13: Yet within three days shall Pharaoh
lift up thine head, and restore thee
unto thy place: and thou shalt deliver
Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the
former manner when thou wast his
butler.

14: But think on me when it shall be
well with thee, and shew kindness, I
pray thee, unto me, and make mention of

me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of
this house:

**15: For indeed I was stolen away out of
the land of the Hebrews: and here also
have I done nothing that they should
put me into the dungeon."**

Joseph had been the bearer of good news.

Maybe the butler would be able to bring
him good news also.

Yes, Joseph had reason to hope that this
meeting was of the Lord.

All these years of confinement were
beginning to make sense.

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And Joseph was not the only one that had
reason to hope.

V 16-19 **"When the chief baker saw that the
interpretation was good, he said unto
Joseph, I also was in my dream, and,**

behold, I had three white baskets on my head:

17: And in the uppermost basket there was of all manner of bakemeats for Pharaoh; and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head.

18: And Joseph answered and said, This is the interpretation thereof: The three baskets are three days:

19: 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."

I'm sure Joseph was much affected by these ill tidings, but he couldn't hide the truth.

And both dreams had been very specific.

In the butler's dream, he had been
successful in performing his office.

V 11 **"And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand: and
I took the grapes, and pressed them
into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup
into Pharaoh's hand."**

The wine was prepared quickly and given to
Pharaoh immediately with no possibility
of contamination or poisoning.

Thus the butler's innocence and his
reinstatement were assured.

However, in the case of the baker, he had
been unsuccessful in his attempt to
deliver his food to Pharaoh: **"The birds
did eat them out of the basket."**

And not only that, but he had failed to
cover the food to protect it from
contamination or any interference by
others.

Thus his dream indicated failure.

Either he would be found guilty of an attempt to poison Pharaoh, or at the very least, neglecting his duty to protect Pharaoh's food.

In either case, he would be executed.

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V 20-22 **"And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants.**

21: And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand:

22: But he hanged the chief baker: as Joseph had interpreted to them."

No doubt Pharaoh had taken the opportunity of this very special day to bring down his verdict.

All of his servants and his government officials, etc. would have been there, gathered from the four corners of the nation to attend his birthday.

So in front of all his guests, Pharaoh reinstated his faithful butler, but the baker was executed immediately and publicly as a warning to any who might contemplate such a crime.

It was a graphic example of the rewards of loyalty and the result of treachery.

And I'm sure someone would have made sure that Pharaoh's political prisoners were informed of his decisive action.

Although this would be chilling news for some of them, it was definitely good news for Joseph.

The butler had been reinstated, and the prison doors would soon be swinging open.

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However, Psalm 146:3-5 says, "**Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.**

4: His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.

5: Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God:"

Certainly Joseph was hoping in "**the God of Jacob,**" and certainly we couldn't blame

him for doing his best to get the ear of Pharaoh, but his plan didn't work. Whether it was just busyness, catching up on things after a prolonged absence, or a reluctance to bring up the subject of prison, we don't know.

Whatever the case, the butler had shamefully neglected his duty.

As V 23 says, **"Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forget him."**

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For a while, Joseph might have consoled himself by saying, *Probably he's just waiting for the right opportunity to bring the subject up.*

However, as the days turned into weeks, and the weeks into months, and finally two long years went by in silence, Joseph realized that he had been forgotten.

His brothers had forgotten him, at least as much as their conscience would allow. Potiphar had forgotten him, in spite of the great prosperity he had enjoyed.

And now it was the butler.

This was just part of a rather dark period in his life that he would rather forget.

I'm sure the prison walls began to close in on Joseph as the full realization of what had happened finally hit him.

And--"**Hope deferred maketh the heart sick.**"

However, as his confidence in the butler turned to ashes, his hope in God remained strong.

Even though he didn't have Romans 8:28 to uphold him, he had its principle in his heart.

**"And we know that all things work together
for good to them that love God, to them
who are the called according to his
purpose"**

And if ever there was a man that was **"called
according to his purpose,"** it was
Joseph.

Of course he was very disappointed, but he
would not despair.

Psalm 42:5 **"Why art thou cast down, O my
soul? and why art thou disquieted in
me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet
praise him for the help of his
countenance."**

He still believed in his own personal
dreams, and he knew for a fact that the
Lord had spoken through him in the case
of the butler and baker, so he
continued to hope in God.

And you know what? The very next step in

Joseph's career also involved dreams.

Genesis 41:1-8 **"And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river.**

2: And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine and fatfleshed; and they fed in a meadow.

3: And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river.

4: And the ill favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke.

5: And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn

came up upon one stalk, rank and good.

6: And, behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them.

7: And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, it was a dream.

8: And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh."

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The corn in Pharaoh's dream probably wasn't corn as we know it, but rather some kind of grain such as wheat or oats.

In those days, that fertile country would have been covered with waving fields of grain, which were the staple crop of the country.

So whether it was corn or cattle, the subject of the dream was Egypt's food supply.

We're not given the name of the river in Pharaoh's dream, but I'm sure it would be the Nile, for it's the only river of any importance in Egypt, and it is their ultimate source of food.

So any dream about the national food supply was important, and its interpretation would be considered a message from the gods.

So the magicians and wisemen were called in immediately.

After all, they were the personal representatives of Egypt's gods, and would certainly know what this was all about.

The problem was, this message wasn't from the gods of Egypt. It was from the one true God, and they knew nothing about Him.

Pharaoh was at his wits' end, and all the wisdom of Egypt was powerless to help him.

It was an absolute crisis!

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Then his cup bearer had an attack of conscience.

Standing right beside his master, and no doubt in a trembling voice, he said, in V 9, **"I do remember my faults this day:**

10: Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house, both me and the chief baker:

11: And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream.

12: And there was there with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each man according to his dream he did interpret.

13: And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged."

There was no doubt what his butler was driving at, but the idea was almost unthinkable.

Pharaoh was probably the most powerful king of his day, ruling one of the greatest civilizations in the known world.

How could he solicit the aid of a Hebrew, a foreigner, a mere slave, and even a criminal?

How could he possibly look for assistance from such a source? But God had set the stage perfectly.

He *had* to know the answer to his dreams, and no one else could help him.

V 14-16 **"Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh.**

15: And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it.

16: And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

Again, as in the case of the chief butler and the chief baker, Joseph's answer gave all the glory to God.

And not only did he give honour to his Creator, but he had to commit his future into His hands.

Two years ago, he had entrusted his future to the chief butler, and had been forgotten.

But now he was in a very unique position.

The whole nation was hanging on his answer,
and he could strike any bargain he
pleased.

Could he not have said, *Yes, I have the
ability to interpret your dreams, but
before I do, I must have your assurance
of my freedom.*

That's what his father would have done.

But instead, Joseph committed his own
welfare into the hands of God, and used
this great opportunity to give glory to
God: **"It is not in me: God shall give
Pharaoh an answer of peace."**

Indeed, this man *had* graduated from God's
university of higher learning.

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And you know what? Not only would it take
humility and the absolute commitment of
his future into God's hands, but such

an answer would take a great deal of courage.

As a slave and a prisoner, he was confronting the mighty Pharaoh of Egypt.

Seated upon his imperial throne, Pharaoh wore the double crown that symbolized the union of Upper and Lower Egypt.

On his brow would be the twin insignias of those two lands, the falcon and the serpent.

In one hand he would be holding the crook for Upper Egypt, in the other would be the flail, the symbol of Lower Egypt.

And he was supposed to be a god himself, the incarnation of Ra.

So his functions were as much religious as they were political.

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No doubt Satan was whispering in Joseph's ear, *You better not tell him that he has to depend on your Hebrew God for his answer. After all, he thinks he's a god himself. If you insult him before his whole court, he'll have you executed, or at least thrown back into prison.*

But Joseph's testimony remained clear.

He didn't see a mighty Pharaoh that he must depend upon for his very life. No, he saw a poor lost sinner that needed to know the one true God.

"It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

And wonder of wonders, that great Pharaoh accepted Joseph's testimony without objection, and told him his dreams.

V 17-24 "And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river:

18: And, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fatfleshed and well favoured; and they fed in a meadow:

19: And, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill favoured and leanfleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness:

20: And the lean and the ill favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine:

21: And when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they were still ill favoured, as at the beginning. So I awoke.

22: And I saw in my dream, and, behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good:

23: And, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them:

24: And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears: and I told this unto the magicians; but there was none that could declare it to me."

And now, with the eyes of all Egypt upon him, it was time for Joseph to speak.

V 25-32 "And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do.

26: The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one.

27: And the seven thin and ill favoured

kine that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine.

28: This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh.

29: Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt:

30: And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land;

31: And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous.

32: And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass."

They only had to wait for a month or two to prove him right or wrong.

He was telling them **"What God is about to do"**--not some obscure prophecy 500 years into the future.

But it didn't even occur to them to check him out.

Even before his words could be proven, both Pharaoh and his court were convinced of their validity.

Pharaoh's dreams had seemed so incomprehensible to his wisemen and magicians.

However, once Joseph interpreted them, their meaning became so obvious, and Joseph's

words had such a ring of truth about them that no one doubted his explanation.

I can almost see the wisemen and magicians shaking their heads and saying to themselves, *Why hadn't we thought of that?*

But more than the obvious truth of Joseph's words was the fact that God had turned the heart of Pharaoh to Joseph's favour, as He had done twice before.

And we can also see the truth of Proverbs 21:1---"**The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.**"

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But Joseph didn't stop there.

As a mere slave and prisoner, he then proceeded to tell Pharaoh, the supreme

ruler of Egypt, how to handle the situation.

V 33-37 "Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

34: Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.

35: And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.

36: And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.

37: And the thing was good in the eyes

of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants."

And not only did Pharaoh accept the advice of a slave, but he gambled his whole future and the future of his of country on this unknown man.

V 38-44 **"And Pharaoh said unto his servants,**

Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?

39: And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:

40: Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

41: And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of

Egypt.

42: And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck;

43: And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.

44: And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."

This was a tremendous step of faith on Pharaoh's part.

He had cast in his lot with Joseph and with Joseph's God.

Had he ignored his interpretation, Egypt
would have been ruined, and very likely
it would have cost him his throne.

Yes, his people had always been used to
prosperity, and the hardships of a
famine might have plunged the country
into revolution.

There's no telling what would have happened
if Pharaoh had ignored Joseph's
interpretation!

As it turned out, this famine established
his throne and his wealth.

Rather than destroying his kingdom, it
consolidated his absolute control over
Egypt.

Yes, the LORD would bless Pharaoh, but He
would bless him for Joseph's sake.

Pharaoh's good fortune, and the saving of Egypt, was but a by-product of God's overall plan.

As Isaiah 40:15-17 says, "**Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.**

16: And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.

17: All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity."

God's only purpose in exulting Pharaoh and saving Egypt was to exalt Joseph, to put into his hands the power to save Israel.

Later, when another Pharaoh arose that knew not Joseph, it would be a different story.

He would say, "**Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?**" And God would bring him and his people down to the dust.

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No doubt Potiphar was also in court on that momentous day. After all, he was the "**captain of the guard.**"

I wonder what his thoughts were when the slave he had put into prison got the top job in Egypt?

I can just imagine the scene in his house that evening.

As they were eating their supper, he might have looked at his wife rather sharply and said, *Do you remember that Hebrew*

*slave that you accused of molesting
you?*

With a soured face, she probably would have
replied, *Oh, yes, I remember him, and
good riddance!*

*Well, Pharaoh has just made him the governor
of Egypt, and I have to report to him
in the morning.*

*For my sake, and especially for yours, I
hope you weren't lying.*

Well, he needn't have worried. Joseph
wasn't a vengeful man.

I'm sure he had settled that account long
ago with the firm conviction--"**ye
thought evil against me; but God meant
it unto good.**"

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One of the key components in Joseph's plan had been to **"look out a man discreet and wise."**

Another key component was to increase the taxes.

According to historical records, it wasn't unusual for nations to collect a tithe, or 10% from the people.

Joseph had proposed a doubling of the taxes, to **"--take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years."**

In that day, Egypt was a prime grain-growing country.

Even in normal years, they could provide for their own needs and maintain a good export business.

So during those seven good years, their tendency would be to increase their exports and make a fortune.

Certainly any man who would take the profit right out of their pockets would *have* to be "**a man discreet and wise**" if this plan was to go smoothly.

So the right man for the job was very important, and I don't think Joseph had any intention of suggesting himself.

After all, he was a foreigner, and had never held any political office.

He had been a herdsman in the past, which, by the way, was a despised occupation in Egypt, and he had no formal training for the job.

But Pharaoh had other ideas.

Joseph's ability to interpret his dreams had thoroughly convinced him that God was with him.

And not only that, but Joseph's character, which God had been honing for years now, had convinced Pharaoh that he was the man.

And, of course, and most importantly, God had turned the heart of the king to Joseph's favour.

What an elevation this was, and in a moment! The long years in prison, in which he had learned humility and patience, had not been wasted.

Most men, being so suddenly elevated, would have been ruined by pride, but not Joseph.

He now had the king's ring on his finger,
giving him the authority to seal
official documents in Pharaoh's name.

And he wore a gold chain about his neck, the
emblem of his own personal authority,
but he was still the Lord's servant.

V 43 **"And he made him to ride in the second
chariot which he had; and they cried
before him, Bow the knee: and he made
him ruler over all the land of Egypt."**

Here again Joseph pictures the Lord Jesus
Christ, the Saviour of His people, and,
indeed, the Saviour of the world.

Immanuel (God with us), He--"**made himself of
no reputation, and took upon him the
form of a servant."**

He was betrayed by His brethren, falsely
judged by a Gentile (as Potiphar had
falsely judged Joseph), and after His

affliction, He became the Saviour of mankind, and eventually His own national brethren.

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As we see Joseph riding through the streets in Pharaoh's chariot, with a gold chain about his neck, and the welfare of Egypt upon his shoulders, and we hear the proclamation, "**Bow the knee,**" once again our minds are turned to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 2:9-11 speaks of His great triumph---"**Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:**

10: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

*11: And that every tongue should
confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to
the glory of God the Father."*