

# From PRISON to Palace

## A Study of the Life of Joseph

### Class 3 • Joseph Resurrected • Genesis 41

- Joseph is still in Prison, and now the Pharaoh has some dreams
- The first dream involves a river from which arise seven fat cows, then seven lean cows which devour the former
- The second dream involves seven good ears of grain springing up on one stalk, and then seven blighted ears of grain which arise and devour the former good ears
- Dreams from God don't seem like regular dreams...
- Several indications of a dream that originates from God are the indelible and disturbing impression it leaves behind, its repetition with variation, and its precise verification
- The magicians consulted their dream manuals, but feared to even guess at an interpretation using vague and ambiguous interpretations
- Thus the mighty Pharaoh's "spirit was troubled," the expression here being akin to the violent beating of one's heart
- Joseph has now been captive and tested by affliction in Egypt for approximately 8 (?) years
- The chief butler states, "I would make mention of my offenses"
- Is this a confession of his forgetfulness regarding Joseph, or a recollection of his earlier offenses that led to his imprisonment?
- Notice how convenient it is NOW for the butler to recall Joseph as a means of advancing himself in Pharaoh's eyes
- For this reason I would say that he has no intention of confessing his guilt and neglect

#### APPLICATION:

- **Consider what Joseph's life would have been like if he had been remembered by the Butler two years earlier. What lessons can we gain for our lives from this?**
- However, imagine if two years earlier, Joseph had been remembered by the butler; might not he have been merely assigned to another house as a slave?

- Rather, greater humiliation was required so that greater exaltation might result
- By this means of sustained humiliation, Joseph's character was further refined, and only shone all the more brilliantly in the face of all of the wisdom and learning of Egypt
- Pharaoh's demand for Joseph's presence required hurried preparation, namely a shave and correct dress
- Notice that Joseph immediately gives God the glory when asked concerning his ability
- Verses 16, 28, and 32
- Joseph assures him that God will give a favorable answer
- He is fearless in testifying concerning God even before the great of this world
- This second account of Pharaoh's dreams is much more graphic, especially with regard to the lean cattle and the blighted ears of grain, which features were worrisome
- You can see that it's been eating on Pharaoh
- Joseph's Interpretation seems rather straight-forward:
- Obviously the river is the Nile, representing Egypt
- The seven fat cows and full ears of wheat are seven years of great plenty that shall follow
- The seven lean cows and blighted ears of wheat are seven years of harsh famine that follow the seven good years
- The duplication of this message was to stress its certain and imminent fulfillment, as well as increase the hearer's responsibility

### **APPLICATION:**

#### **• Joseph shows the characteristics of a good Preacher when he stands before Pharaoh. What are they?**

- He stands spotless in character, tried and proven
- He is called forth to speak by means of God's sovereign direction
- He speaks "thus saith the Lord," come what may
- He speaks of God's judgment
- He speaks of a way of escape and God's blessing
- Up to this point, Joseph's interpretation has not been "a favorable answer," but now his godly instruction will bring about personal prosperity that even Pharaoh never dreamed about, through wise economic planning

- Joseph's wisdom is that which comes from above
- He is sensitive to God's will and intentions; he perceives the mind of God
- How necessary it was that a discerning and wise man be found who, with necessary authority, could enforce the following proposed plan
- Someone was needed who believed the dream and would continue to do so
- When food abounds, people tend to disbelieve the prospect of hard times
- Yet it is most unlikely that Joseph had himself in mind
- Thus a 20% tax on grain was recommended, and collectors were to gather this into Pharaoh's granaries during the seven prosperous years for the seven lean years
- Joseph, having learned how to run Potiphar's household and the penitentiary inmates as well, now applies his experience on a national scale.

### **APPLICATION:**

- **Joseph is a great lesson in planning for the future. What lessons can we learn from how he did it?**
- It is wise to plan for the future, provided that we plan according to the future that God ordains, and not the future that is according to selfish ambition
- Pharaoh himself shows the mark of a good leader when faced with clearly superior ideas that come from an inferior
- Instead of squashing them out of jealousy, he incorporates them yet not as his own
- In Verse 38, Pharaoh seeks an Egyptian first, inadvertently provides evidence of the godless and incompetent state of his nation, and its need of a savior
- However, Pharaoh, for all his pagan ways, yet perceives the benefits of employing staff that are spiritual
- Pharaoh's declaration of Joseph's high appointment by himself ignores the overriding fact of God's sovereign determination
- Jealous brothers, mercenary Midianites, a vicious woman, an angry Potiphar, and a forgetful butler, could not prohibit but only work toward the accomplishment of God's desire for Joseph
- Romans 8:28 KJV

28) And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

- Joseph's exaltation is total
- God doesn't "just barely" save us!
- He is made prime minister, second in the land, and this is signified with a signet ring
- A procession is arranged in Joseph's honor to educate the people to submit to his rule
- He receives a new name, "Zaphenath-paneah," which means, "Chief steward in the realm in the face of famine"
- He receives a wife from Pharaoh, "Asenath," born of an aristocratic, priestly family
- Thus Joseph beautifully pictures the exaltation of Jesus Christ, the real Savior
- Jesus Christ also left his Father's bosom for humiliation that led to exaltation
- Jesus Christ also receives a Gentile bride
- In God's plan and purpose, a much larger perspective is in view than simply a rags to riches story
- Joseph is to be the agent of a great reconciliation
- In fact he was raised to reconcile!
- Furthermore, he is to be the means by which a small band of Hebrews shall seek refuge in a pagan land, and yet leave some four hundred years later as a strong nation!
- Regarding Joseph's original dreams, part has now been fulfilled, namely his exaltation, but his family has yet to bow down before him
- Nonetheless, he would start to be encouraged by the beginning of fulfillment
- Joseph will be even further encouraged as he witnesses fulfilled prophecy for the next fourteen years, as a testimony to God's certain ways
- As each year passed, no doubt more enforcement of the grain tax was necessary on account of scoffing farmers
- As the granaries increasingly increased with food, more and more was Joseph unpopular as a Hebrew foreigner (The beginning of the "Greedy Jew" mentality?)
- Surely it was the gods of Egypt who were perpetuating this prosperity!
- But for seven years Joseph resolutely trusted God's revelation, in spite of circumstances that tempted him to believe otherwise

- Joseph has sons
- Manasseh means, “God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father’s household”
- This does not mean to completely forget, but to have these matters further back in his mind with less worry and sadness
- Ephraim means, “God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction”
- This tends to suggest contentment, especially with a wife and family
- Jewish Tradition declares that Joseph was given one hundred slaves from Pharaoh and lived in a spacious and magnificent palace
- Yet his memory of family ties will soon be vividly aroused
- Both of these sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, will later be adopted into the tribe of Jacob
- They will take their place amongst the twelve tribes in place of Levi and Joseph
- Note that both of these given names are Hebrew
- This indicates that Joseph’s faith in God never waned though surrounded with the wealth and culture of Egypt
- Then, things turn pear shaped... Seven YEARS of Famine
- A whole nation now has bread on account of one godly man
- Joseph is the mediator of bread for hungry bodies, just as Jesus Christ is the mediator of living bread for hungry souls
- As each year went by, Joseph became more popular
- With the people, as their hunger was satisfied and they increasingly realized Joseph’s wisdom
- With Pharaoh, as he obtained through Joseph the wealth of Egypt
- Hence, Joseph was like Jesus Christ who “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man”
- Joseph’s fame spread far and wide so that he became the savior of the local world
- Shortly following this he will also be the savior of his brethren