

GENESIS 40: JOSEPH INTERPRETS DREAMS

I. INTRO

- A. Have you ever gone through difficulty or hardship?
 - i. Only to find out that what you learned during that time was invaluable?
- B. This is what Joseph is experiencing in this chapter
 - i. He was enslaved and wrongly imprisoned
 - ii. But it becomes training ground for the future

II. OVERVIEW

- A. Two of Pharaoh's officers got thrown in prison
 - i. They were placed under Joseph's care
- B. One night they each had a dream
 - i. In the morning, Joseph asked them to tell him the dreams
- C. The cup bearer told his dream to Joseph
 - i. Joseph gave him the interpretation of the dream
 - a. In three days he would be restored to his office
 - b. Joseph asked him to remember him when he was restored to Pharaoh
- D. Then the baker told Joseph his dream
 - i. Joseph gave him the interpretation
 - a. In three days the baker would be hanged
- E. Three days later the interpretations of the dreams came to pass
 - i. The cupbearer was restored to his office and the baker was hanged
 - ii. But the cupbearer forgot about Joseph

III. SOME TIME AFTER THIS – V. 1

- A. Joseph was in prison for a while before the events of this chapter take place
- B. Yet he remained faithful and continued to serve humbly

IV. CUPBEARER – V. 1

- A. Or butler
- B. His job was to taste Pharaoh's wine before giving it to him to make sure it wasn't poisoned
- C. He had access to Pharaoh's ear

V. BAKER – V. 1

- A. Had charge of Pharaoh's meals

VI. COMMITTED AN OFFENSE – V. 1

- A. We aren't told what this offense was
- B. Possibly suspicion of attempted murder
 - i. Potentially through poisoning of the food or drink

VII. CHIEF CUPBEARER AND THE CHIEF BAKER – V. 2

- A. Their titles are repeated from the previous verse
 - i. Possibly to indicate it was an employee that committed the crime
 - ii. And the supervisors were being held responsible

VIII. WHERE JOSEPH WAS CONFINED – V. 3

- A. They came under Joseph's care
- B. We know from the previous chapter that the Lord was with Joseph
 - i. This is why we aren't told the crimes these two committed
 - ii. Because the true reason they were there was to meet with Joseph and his God

IX. CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD – V. 4

- A. This was Potiphar himself
 - i. Genesis 39:1 **Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there.**
 - ii. He had a prison in his house
- B. Proof that Potiphar never really believed his wife's accusations against Joseph

X. HE ATTENDED THEM – V. 4

- A. Or, served them
 - i. Joseph showed true leadership
 - ii. Luke 22:25-27 **And he said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.**

XI. THEY BOTH DREAMED – V. 5

- A. This is the second set of two dreams

XII. HE SAW THAT THEY WERE TROUBLED – V. 6

- A. Joseph was not consumed with bitterness over his situation

- i. Otherwise he would not have noticed the troubles of others¹

XIII. WITH HIM IN CUSTODY – V. 7

- A. Previously, Joseph attended them as his superiors in verse 4
 - i. Now, they are in custody with Joseph
 - ii. The roles have flipped – Rabbeinu Bayha (14th Century Jewish commentator)
- B. Circumstances have a way of removing the differences between us
 - i. Galatians 3:23-29 ***Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.***

XIV. NO ONE TO INTERPRET THEM – V. 8

- A. Egypt had magicians that would provide dream interpretation among other things
 - i. Exodus 7:10-12 ***So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron cast down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret arts. For each man cast down his staff, and they became serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.***
 - ii. They may have even requested a magician come interpret the dream
- B. Babylon did this too
 - i. Daniel 2:1-4 ***In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his spirit was troubled, and his sleep left him. Then the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king. And the king said to them, “I had a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream.” Then the Chaldeans said to the king in Aramaic, “O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation.”***

¹ Guzik, D. (2018). Genesis 40 - Joseph Interprets Dreams In Prison. Enduring Word. <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/genesis-40/>

XV. DO NOT INTERPRETATIONS BELONG TO GOD – V. 8

- A. Joseph gives glory to God instead of taking it for himself
 - i. Reveals his humility
- B. It doesn't necessarily say the dream was from God
 - i. But the interpretation is certainly from God
- C. God speaks through dreams all through the Bible
 - i. He gave more dreams to pagans than to His people²
- D. God still speaks in dreams today although we need to be discerning
 - i. Not every dream is from God
 - ii. False prophets may use false dreams or use dreams falsely
 - a. Deuteronomy 13:1-5 ***If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, ‘Let us go after other gods,’ which you have not known, ‘and let us serve them,’ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has taught rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of slavery, to make you leave the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.***
 - b. Jeremiah 23:25-28 ***I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, ‘I have dreamed, I have dreamed!’ How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart, who think to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another, even as their fathers forgot my name for Baal? Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? declares the LORD.***
 - iii. God promised to give people dreams in the last days

² Guzik

- a. Acts 2:17-18 "***And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.***

iv. Dreams should never be inconsistent with the Bible

XVI. TELL THEM TO ME – V. 8

- A. Joseph wasn't trying to increase his dream interpretation ministry
- B. He genuinely cared about these men and wanted to help
 - i. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 ***If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.***

XVII. VINE – V. 9

- A. The images in the dream would have been familiar to the cupbearer
- B. Possibly an indication the dream could be from God when we notice this

XVIII. AS SOON AS IT BUDDED – V. 10

- A. The language reflects a quick progression
 - i. Indicated to Joseph this would take place in three days

XIX. THREE DAYS – V. 12

- A. Everyone would find out if the dream was true in three days
- B. The number three indicates it was established by God
 - i. God's hand is shown throughout this entire chapter

XX. LIFT UP YOUR HEAD – V. 13

- A. Phrase meaning the case would be heard by the king and the individual would be restored³

XXI. REMEMBER ME - V. 14

- A. Joseph may have been showing a lack of faith⁴
 - i. He trusted in what the cupbearer could do for him instead of what God could do
 - a. But the cupbearer would end up forgetting

³ Wiersbe, W. W. (2010). *Be Authentic (Genesis 25-50): Exhibiting Real Faith in the Real World*. David C. Cook.

⁴ Wiersbe

- ii. God had already been with him and blessed him with Potiphar and in prison
- iii. Psalm 146:3-6 ***Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish. Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever...***

B. Or he recognized an opportunity to get out of prison

- i. Just because God was with him didn't mean God wanted him there forever
- ii. Obedience doesn't mean we can't try to improve our circumstances

XXII. DO ME THE KINDNESS – V. 14

A. Essentially, show me the mercy you will be shown

XXIII. STOLEN – V. 15

A. He was kidnapped unjustly and sold into slavery

XXIV. HERE ALSO I HAVE DONE NOTHING – V. 15

- A. Not only was he kidnapped but he was thrown in prison unjustly
- B. He never had a fair trial

XXV. INTO THE PIT – V. 15

- A. The prison was probably not as bad as that
 - i. It was reserved for prisoners of the king⁵
- B. Joseph is comparing prison with the cistern he was thrown in by his brothers
 - i. Even though God's favor was on him, the betrayal stung just as much
 - ii. It still felt just as dark as when his brothers betrayed him

XXVI. SAW THAT THE INTERPRETATION WAS FAVORABLE – V. 16

A. The butler assumed he would receive a good interpretation also

XXVII. BAKED FOOD – V. 17

A. This food would go stale quickly

- i. Indicating the dream would come to pass quickly

XXVIII. THE BIRDS WERE EATING IT – V. 17

- A. Instead of the baker giving it to Pharaoh to eat
- B. Contrasted with the cupbearer putting the cup in Pharaoh's hand
 - i. Indicated the baker would not share the same fate

⁵ Wiersbe

XXIX. LIFT UP YOUR HEAD – V. 19

- A. Double meaning
 - i. Pharaoh would hear his case but order his execution
 - ii. Egyptians wouldn't hang with a rope
 - a. They cut off the head and impaled the body on a stake⁶

XXX. HANG YOU ON A TREE – V. 19

- A. Joseph didn't shy away from giving bad news
- B. God's people must be just as willing to give messages of judgment as they are blessing

XXXI. FORGOT HIM – V. 23

- A. Not that he forgot Joseph existed
 - i. His attention was not turned to Joseph
- B. This is the third great wrong done to Joseph
 - i. Indicates the large amount of testing he had to endure
 - ii. This would also be the last time he will be wronged
- C. God had great things in store for Joseph
 - i. But first he had to go through great discipline and training
 - ii. He had to spend many years in Egypt to learn the language and customs
 - a. He wouldn't be able to effectively rule without this knowledge
 - b. Psalm 105:16-22 *When he summoned a famine on the land and broke all supply of bread, he had sent a man ahead of them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave. His feet were hurt with fetters; his neck was put in a collar of iron; until what he had said came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him. The king sent and released him; the ruler of the peoples set him free; he made him lord of his house and ruler of all his possessions, to bind his princes at his pleasure and to teach his elders wisdom.*
- D. Many of us want the greatness of Joseph's role later in Genesis
 - i. But aren't willing to go through the training required for the role

XXXII. POINTS TO JESUS

- A. Joseph foreshadows Jesus
 - i. He was lowered to the position of the guilty

⁶ Wiersbe

- a. 2 Corinthians 5:21 **For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**
- ii. Joseph suffered unjustly yet only cared about the needs of others
 - a. Philippians 2:3-8 **Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**
- iii. He was surrounded by two criminals
 - a. Luke 23:32-33 **Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.**
- iv. One criminal was saved and the other was not
 - a. Luke 23:39-43 **One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.” And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”**
- v. He delivered the word of the Lord
 - a. John 3:31-34 **He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all. He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure.**
- vi. The word was proven accurate in three days
 - a. John 2:19-22 **Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking about the temple of his**

body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

vii. His message brought both life and death

a. 1 Peter 2:4-8 *As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.*

viii. He was tested three times

a. Matthew 4:1-3 *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."*

B. The cupbearer and the baker foreshadow Jesus

i. Jesus spent three days in the pit

ii. Jesus' body was broken

a. Represented by the bread broken at the meal

b. Just like the baker's body was broken after three days

iii. Jesus' blood was poured out to give life

a. Represented by the wine at the meal

b. Just like the cupbearer poured out wine after three days

XXXIII. QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

A. How can you show servant leadership in your home? In your workplace? In your church? In your neighborhood?

B. Why do you think God gives dreams to those who don't believe in Him?

C. Why do you think God would give a dream to someone that is difficult to interpret?

D. Have you ever had a dream that troubled you when you woke up? Were you able to find an interpretation?

E. How do we gain the discernment to know if a dream, whether our own or from someone else, is from the Lord?

F. How has the Lord used hardship in your life to prepare you for a future task or assignment?

XXXIV. FURTHER STUDY

A. Why does God provide the interpretation for dreams? See Daniel 2:47.

B. What does the Psalmist mean when he calls God “the lifter of my head” (Psalm 3:3)?

C. How do we recognize false prophets when they claim to have a dream from the Lord (Matthew 7:15-23; Galatians 5:18-24)?

D. Why would God give someone a dream or prophecy of their death (2 Kings 20:1-7)? What opportunity may have been given to the baker based on this?
