

Gen 40 – The Butler and the Baker

THEME: Joseph interprets dreams for the butler and baker; fulfillment of the dreams.

This chapter, rather than advancing the story of Joseph, seems to slow it down to absolutely no movement at all. We see Joseph in prison, and he is delayed and circumscribed by the ingratitude of the chief butler of Pharaoh. We may ask what all this means. May I say to you that all of this is accomplishing God's plan and purpose in Joseph's life. We will see this as we get into the chapter.

In chapter 37 we started a comparison between Joseph and the Lord Jesus. Now that we are farther along in the story, let us stop to make some more comparisons:

1. Joseph was sent to his brethren. The Lord Jesus Christ was sent to His brethren, the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
2. Joseph was hated by his brethren without a cause, and this is what the Lord Jesus says about Himself, "They hated me without a cause."
3. Joseph was sold by his own brothers, and the Lord Jesus was sold by one of His own brethren.
4. Joseph was sold for twenty pieces of silver. The Lord Jesus was sold for thirty pieces of silver.
5. The brothers plotted to kill Joseph. The brethren plotted to kill the Lord Jesus—"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."
6. Joseph was put into the pit which was meant to be a place of death for him. The Lord Jesus was crucified.
7. Joseph was raised up out of that pit. The Lord Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day.
8. Joseph obeyed his father. The Lord Jesus obeyed His Father so that He could say that He always did the things which pleased His Father.
9. Joseph's father had sent him to seek his brethren. We are told that the Lord Jesus Christ came to do the will of His Father when he came here not seek His brethren.
10. Joseph was mocked by his brethren. When they saw him coming, they said, "Behold, this dreamer cometh." The Lord Jesus was mocked by His brethren. When He was on the Cross, they said, "If He be the Christ, let Him come down now from the cross."
11. The brothers refused to receive Joseph, and the brethren of the Lord Jesus, the Jews, refused to receive Him.
12. They took counsel to kill Joseph, and we are told they took counsel to plot the death of the Lord Jesus.
13. Joseph's coat dripping with blood was returned to his father. They took the coat of the Lord Jesus and gambled for it.
14. After Joseph was sold into Egypt, he was lost sight of for many years. Christ ascended up into heaven. He told His disciples that they should see Him no more until His return.
15. Joseph was tempted by the world, the flesh, and the Devil, and he resisted. The Lord Jesus was tempted by the world, the flesh, and the Devil, and He won the victory.
16. Joseph became the savior of the world during this period, in the physical sense—he saved them from starvation. The Lord Jesus Christ in every sense is the Savior of the whole world.
17. Joseph was hated by his brothers, and they delivered him to the Gentiles. He couldn't defend himself, and he was unjustly accused. The Lord Jesus was also delivered by His own to the religious rulers who in turn delivered Him to the Gentiles. He was innocent.

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18. Pilate did not believe the accusation which was brought against the Lord Jesus. He found Him innocent, yet he scourged Him. And Joseph had to suffer although Potiphar probably knew that he was innocent. Potiphar had to keep up a front before Pharaoh as Pilate had to keep up a front before Caesar.

19. Joseph found favor in the sight of the jailer. And in the case of Jesus, the Roman centurion said of Him, "Truly, this was the Son of God."

20. Joseph was numbered with the transgressors. He was a blessing to the butler, and he was judgment for the baker. The Lord Jesus was crucified between two thieves. One was judged and the other was blessed.

In the chapter before us we will begin to see why it was the will of God that Joseph be in prison at this time. - McGee

Joseph Interprets Two Prisoners' Dreams

Gen 40:1-4 It came to pass after these things that the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt. And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief butler and the chief baker. So he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison, the place where Joseph was confined. And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them; so they were in custody for a while.

That was no accident!

What does this reveal? It certainly reveals to us the arbitrary and dictatorial position and policy that the pharaohs of Egypt had. I don't know what the baker did—maybe he burned the biscuits for breakfast. For some whim, Pharaoh put him into prison. What did the butler do? Maybe he was bringing up a glass of wine to Pharaoh and stubbed his toe and spilled it on the Persian rug that was there. I don't know. It isn't told us why both the baker and the butler of Pharaoh were in the prison, but the important thing is that they are put where Joseph is. Joseph occupies a good position, even here in the prison. Everywhere he went, his ability was certainly recognized. "A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men" (Pro_18:16). Certainly this was true for Joseph. And God is moving in his life with a very definite purpose.

Joseph got acquainted with them because he had charge of them. It was his business to take care of them while they were in prison. - McGee

Gen 40:5-6 Then the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison, had a dream, both of them, each man's dream in one night and each man's dream with its own interpretation. And Joseph came in to them in the morning and looked at them, and saw that they were sad.

Joseph was an optimistic type of individual, always bright and sharp, and he finds these two fellows, who occupy positions with Pharaoh, sitting dolefully with very dark looks upon their faces. - McGee

Gen 40:7-8 So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in the custody of his lord's house, saying, "Why do you look so sad today?" And they said to him, "We each have had a dream, and there is no interpreter of it." So Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me, please."

Joseph gives God all the glory in this. Later on we will find another young Hebrew in a foreign court who will do the same thing—Daniel also gave God the glory. I wish Christians today would do this. Anything you or I do for the Lord should be done to the praise of God. Make sure that God gets the glory for it. I believe that one of the reasons many of us are not blessed as much as the Lord would like to bless us is because when we do receive something wonderful, we take it for granted and we do not give God the glory for it. We need to give God the glory. Joseph should give God the glory, and he does! He says, "Do not interpretations belong to God?" - McGee

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Gen 40:9-11 *Then the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, "Behold, in my dream a vine was before me, and in the vine were three branches; it was as though it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and its clusters brought forth ripe grapes. Then Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand."*

Gen 40:12-13 *And Joseph said to him, "This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days. Now within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your place, and you will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand according to the former manner, when you were his butler."*

It is interesting to see that God used dreams in the Old Testament. We don't find God moving that way in the New Testament, because then the canon of Scripture was complete. We don't need dreams today, but in that day, God did speak in dreams, and He used symbols that were meaningful to them. A butler would understand about serving wine—that was what he did for Pharaoh. Later on we will find King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream of an image. Now he was certainly acquainted with images and with idols—that would be something that he could understand very well.

Joseph was able to interpret the dream and promised the butler that he would be restored in three days. – McGee

Joel 2:28 -29 *"In the last days I will send My Spirit on all men. Then your sons and daughters will speak God's Word. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see special dreams. Yes, on My servants, both men and women, I will pour out My Spirit in those days."*

So which is it do you believe McGee that God used dreams in the Old Testament and has no need for to use them after the New Testament?

Gen 40:14-15 *But remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house. For indeed I was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews; and also I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon."*

He says, "Now you will be out of here in three days, but I'll be here until I rot unless somebody moves in my behalf. I've interpreted your dream—please don't forget me!"

Although the record doesn't tell us, the butler probably promised that he would speak to Pharaoh in Joseph's behalf. - McGee

Gen 40:16-19 *When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said to Joseph, "I also was in my dream, and there were three white baskets on my head. In the uppermost basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head." So Joseph answered and said, "This is the interpretation of it: The three baskets are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh from you."*

The dream of the baker is in a symbol meaningful to him. He can understand a basket filled with little cookies, sweetmeats.

Joseph's interprets his dream for him but warns that it is not going to be good for him. In three days he is to be taken out and hanged, and the birds will eat his flesh. – McGee

Are you faithful to give the message the Lord gives even when it is not good news? In some respects, this is simple honesty. Are you willing to issue the bad report, like Joseph has now twice?

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Gen 40:20-23 *Now it came to pass on the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants. Then he restored the chief butler to his butlership again, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand. But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them. Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.*

Do you see the contrast almost all the Characters in the story let Joseph down, but he is always faithful in every relationship? How about?

At times, do you feel forgotten? Feel like your slave or prison in a holding pattern?

Poor Joseph! This seems like a hopeless predicament now. Here he is, not only a slave, but one who has been falsely accused. Believe me, the prison bars are just as real as if he were guilty of some crime. The poor boy is here, and it is the purpose of Potiphar to forget him. That is his way of covering up the scandal that was in his own home. Joseph has to pay for Potiphar's cover-up. Joseph's one glimmer of light had been that the butler would remember him to Pharaoh. This seemed to be such a marvelous way of getting the ear of Pharaoh. But the butler is so elated with going back to his job and being in favor with Pharaoh again that he forgets all about poor Joseph. God wants to leave him there for a purpose. Suppose the butler had said to Pharaoh, "There is a prisoner down there who is innocent. He should not be there—he has been falsely accused. And he interpreted my dream for me. I sure would appreciate it, Pharaoh, if you would let him out." Suppose Pharaoh had let him out, don't you see what would have happened? He would have been at home in the land of Canaan at the time that Pharaoh needed him to interpret his dream. God wants to keep him nearby, and prison is a convenient place to keep him—there will be no difficulty in Pharaoh's finding him when he needs him.

In spite of the discouragement, Joseph believed that God was moving in his life, and there were fruits of faith which were apparent. He was faithful in every relationship of his life. He was faithful to Potiphar. In prison he was faithful to the keeper of the prison. He was faithful to God, always giving Him the glory. We will see later on that he will be faithful to Pharaoh, and he will be faithful to his own brothers. You see, Joseph's faith made him faithful. My friend, I believe that if you are truly a believer, you will be faithful.

We are living in a day when one of the tragic things happening is that there are so few Christians one can depend upon. I have a friend who is the head of a large Christian organization. We had a chance to sit together alone in a foreign city, just he and I. He was telling me some of the problems he had. He is in a tremendous organization, and yet he was telling me how few men he could really trust in his organization. Remember, this is a Christian organization. We see so few men in true faithfulness to their positions. We thank God for those who are. I have always thanked the Lord that He has put around me, everywhere I have ever been, a few faithful ones. I tell you, they are dear ones who are a great encouragement.

Joseph was that kind of a man. His faith made him faithful. It also gave him his optimistic outlook on life, even under all his trials and temptations. And it was faith that gave him his sympathetic and kindly attitude toward everyone. Notice how kind he was to the butler and the baker. And later on we will see his kindness to his brothers. Another thing that his faith did for him was to make him a very humble man. He gave God the glory for all his achievements. What a wonderful person he was! And what was responsible? Well, he believed God. He believed God as his father Abraham had believed Him, and this was the fruit that faith produced in his life.

Here is Joseph—forgotten in the prison. But Someone has not forgotten him; God has not forgotten him, and He is at work in his life.

Friend, this has a message for you and me. I don't know what your circumstances are right now, but I do know, judging from the letters that I get, that many folk are in a hard place. One man wrote to me, "I am between a rock and a hard place. Things look very dark." You don't see the way out, and you wonder if God cares. That is the reason God has given

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this story of Joseph. He wants you to know that He cares and that He is moving in your life. If you are His child, He is permitting things to happen to you for your own good. His chastisements are always for our good. Friend, we can't miss! How wonderful our God is!