

GENESIS 39-40

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Genesis chapter 39 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

If you remember from our last study in Genesis chapter 37, Joseph, the son of Jacob, had two dreams from God. One showed his eleven brothers bowing down before him and the other had his mother, father and eleven brothers bowing down before him.

How do you think his brothers responded to what Joseph told them?

We don't have to guess, and we saw that his brothers didn't like what they heard, and they hated Joseph for it. They were envious of what God was doing in his life and that envy was going to eat at them.

Then one day a situation arose when they could take care of this dreamer and put an end to his dreams.

Jacob, Joseph's father, sends him to find out how his brothers are doing, and I get the feeling that Jacob didn't trust these guys.

Now as Joseph tracks them down, they plot to kill him. But instead, they sell him to Midianite traders who in turn sell Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and the captain of his guard.

In chapter 38 the focus is on Judah, another son of Jacob, and his ungodly behavior.

What a contrast as we look at the life of Joseph compared to Judah.

The focus now, really through the end of the book of Genesis is on the life of Joseph and how the family of Jacob will make the journey down to Egypt.

Let me share with you what Warren Wiersbe has to say regarding Egypt during this time that Joseph was down there. We are told,

The Egypt in which Joseph found himself was primarily a land of small villages inhabited by peasants who worked the land and raised grain and vegetables. Thanks to their system of irrigation, the annual flooding of the Nile River supplied ample water for both the crops and the cattle.

There were some large cities such as On (Hieropolis), where Ra the sun god was honored, and Memphis, devoted to Apis, the sacred bull, but most of the population lived in the small villages.

It was also a country shackled by religious superstition. The people recognized at least two thousand gods and goddesses, including Pharaoh himself; and the special emphasis was on preparing for the after-life when the god Osiris would judge one's deeds. In a very real sense, Egypt was a land devoted to death as much as to life.

The Egyptians were great builders, and the rulers conscripted both slaves and their own citizens for vast building projects.

While the common people lived in mud brick houses, the important structures were constructed of stone. (Some of the pyramids contain stones that weigh as much as fifteen tons.)

The government was a large bureaucracy, with many officials at various levels and thousands of scribes to keep the records.

Egyptian priests and wise men studied the heavens and the earth, developed a solar year calendar of 365 1/4 days, and became well known for their medicines.

They also perfected the art of embalming.

The Egyptians had horses and chariots, and they knew the art of war.

There were many Semitic slaves like Joseph in Egypt, but Joseph was very special because the Lord was with him (39:2-3). Because the Lord was with Joseph, he was a man of accomplishment, but what Joseph accomplished, we can accomplish if we trust in the Lord and seek to honor Him as he did.

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – OT, pp. 120-121

So tonight, as we look at Genesis chapter 39, starting in verse 1, we will pick-up the story of Joseph, who is down in Egypt, a slave.

And let me say this, the story of Joseph is fascinating, and it is encouraging. I hope you are blessed as much as I have been blessed as we go through these chapters.

So, with that said, let's dig into God's Word and see what He has for us this evening.

GENESIS 39

VERSE 1

Joseph is a slave in the house of Potiphar, who is a “**captain of the guard**” for Pharaoh. It speaks of him being “*chief of the executioners,*” and thus, this is not the guy you want to mess with, especially if you were a slave! (That is what the word “**guard**” speaks of.)

The name “**Potiphar**” means, “*devoted to the sun,*” which was the local deity of On, a town of lower Egypt and known also by its Greek name, Heliopolis.

One more thing, and it may play a role in what will take place with Potiphar's wife.

The Hebrew word for “**captain**” or “**officer,**” *CARIYE*, (saw-reece') can mean “*chamberlain, eunuch, officer.*”

Now it is very possible that Potiphar was a eunuch or a man who was made incapable of having sexual relations with a woman.

Why would they do such a thing?

Because it was very common to make those who had some of the highest rankings in the royal courts eunuchs to ensure that they would be devoted to their king and not to the king's wife!

If this is true, that Potiphar was a eunuch, that could help explain why his wife tried to get Joseph in bed.

It can also be, as we will see, a normal practice for her as well. That was her lifestyle you might say.

VERSES 2-6

There is no doubt that Joseph loved the Lord and was sensitive to the Lord's leading, but now this!

I don't think we put ourselves in the shoes of these people, the things that they were going through.

Think about it. How would you respond if you were put in a situation like this?

Like I have said, Joseph did nothing wrong and yet; here he is a slave in Egypt.

We don't see Joseph mad, complaining how unfair life is, that God doesn't love him anymore or whatever complaints he may have. Not at all!

This is a great example for us to learn and apply to our lives. Instead of complaining Joseph did the best job he could do in the situation he was in, and God blessed him for his faithful service in spite of the situation.

Joseph was a successful slave. I know, that sounds funny, but it is true. And because of his work ethics, Potiphar saw the hand of God upon his life!

Do you understand that?

This pagan man who worshiped the sun god as well as the many gods of Egypt, saw that the God of Joseph not only blessed Joseph, but he was blessed because of Joseph!

In your job, does your boss see God working in you and through you?

Now you may be thinking, *“But you don’t know what a jerk my boss is!”* Or *“You don’t know my work situation, the way they talk and the things that they do!”*

Folks, Joseph was a slave in Egypt and even here in the house of an idolater, he allowed the light of God to shine brightly through him.

Thus, may we all do the same no matter where we work or how difficult the situation is!

Remember what Paul said in Colossians 3:17, **“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”**

You see, by His strength, we can do that!

Do you want the place you work to be blessed?

Then, instead of complaining, being angry, and doing a half-hearted job, do your best and pray for your job. Allow godliness to flow from your life and it will affect others.

You see, godliness will prevail over evil, but it is not always easy.

Think about the situation that Joseph was placed in. He was seventeen years old; he knew nothing of the language, the culture, the customs of Egypt and yet he not only learned them, but he had to do his daily work! He was a man who was more interested in bringing glory to God than pouting over the situation he was in!

And please understand that this did not happen overnight or over just a few years. Let me show you how long Joseph was a slave at the house of Potiphar.

First, we see that Joseph was sold into slavery when he was seventeen years old. (Genesis 37:2)

He was thirty years old when Pharaoh promoted him. (Genesis 41:46)

Joseph was in prison for at least two years before his promotion by Pharaoh. (Genesis 41:1)

That means that Joseph was a slave in the house of Potiphar for, at the most, eleven years, probably a little less because in prison he is moved into a position of overseeing the other prisoners. That means it took a little time for that to happen.

Imagine day in and day out serving and yet, he did it faithfully.

We are bondslaves of Jesus Christ and thus, we have freely submitted our lives to Him, and we need to allow Him to use our lives for what He desires and not what we desire.

And here is the wonderful thing. If you truly surrender your life to Him, then His will becomes your will and there is no complaining, just joyful service!

As we read on, keep in mind what we were told because it will fit into what happens next.

We closed Genesis 39:6 with these words, “**... And Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.**”

And now look at what happens!

VERSES 7-10

Look at how God is using Joseph. How God is not only blessing Joseph but Potiphar as well.

Make no mistake about it. When God is working in a person's life, when God is using someone, the Devil wants to step in and stop that work, and we see that here.

The wife of Potiphar is making goo-goo eyes at Joseph; she propositioned him by saying, **“Lie with me.”**

Talk about a strong temptation, but it won't be the first or the last time Satan tempts people.

Paul tells us in I Corinthians 10:13, **“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”**

I don't care what temptation, what kind of sin you find yourself in, it is not unique. Don't go thinking, *“No one understands what I'm going through!”* It is all common to man, it is sin!

And the only way out of those situations is to surrender to the Lord, to be obedient to Him, to follow God's desire for your life!

Keep in mind that Joseph is in his twenty's now and that sex drive is in play here. But Joseph resists these temptations, these invitations. He is going to flee!

And I like that Joseph did not try to justify this or rationalize this, he closed the door to it! He tells Potiphar's wife that her husband trusts him, he has placed him in charge of the household and if he committed this sin, yes, it would affect people, but he would be sinning against God!

How important that is. When we sin, it is against God and it gives the enemies of God a chance to mock our God! Be careful.

And please understand that this was not a one-time proposition by her, but day in and day out she flirted, tempted Joseph but Joseph was obedient to the Lord and not the flesh.

You see, obedience is much easier when we know who God is. When we have a relationship with Him, when we are in love with Him, nothing else will satisfy us!

Spurgeon put it like this, *“When I regarded God as a tyrant, I thought sin a trifle; but when I knew him to be my father, then I mourned that I could ever have kicked against him. When I thought that God was hard, I found it easy to sin; but when I found God so kind, so good, so overflowing with compassion, I smote upon my breast to think that I could ever have rebelled against one who loved me so, and sought my good.”*

That is the perspective we need to have!

VERSES 11-12

I think Potiphar’s wife usually got what she wanted and when Joseph kept refusing her advances, she took the situation into her own hands.

The house was empty except for except her and Joseph and she grabbed him, and said, **“Lie with me.”**

And folks, like I have said, there are all kinds of justification we can come up with for our sin, but in the end, it is still *SIN!*

And to escape this temptation, the way out was for Joseph to flee and he either left naked or in his underwear because she had his outer garment in her hand!

The Bible tells us to flee fornication, flee idolatry, to flee youthful lusts and that is exactly what Joseph did.

Paul, in II Timothy 2:22 put it like this and it is very simple and yet, we need to heed his warning. He wrote, **“Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”**

Flee those youthful lusts but pursue the things that are good, the things of God! It is a choice on our part!

And let me say this. Don't think for a minute that if you are 30 or 40 or 50 or 80 you can't have youthful lusts. It is not about your age, but your heart!

And if you notice, God did provide a way out for Joseph, but Joseph needed to take those steps and flee, not linger.

And folks, isn't it better to flee than to fall?

Of course it is!

And please understand that Joseph knew his stand for godliness, for what was right, for purity was going to cost him dearly. But he was willing to stand up for what was right rather than succumbing to sin!

Joseph did what was right, but things are not going to work out the way you think they would.

VERSES 13-18

Talk about an evil woman, that was Potiphar's wife. She wanted Joseph but he rejected her advances and thus, this woman who got what she wanted most of the time, but not here, she was angry. And now she calls the servants of the house in, and she tells them that this Hebrew man tried to rape her! She tells her husband the same thing, that this Hebrew man tried to rape her!

And now something had to be done. Potiphar could not ignore this. She knew that what she accused Joseph of was going to be the end of his life, it was a death sentence.

In fact, if you think about it, she knew his name very well. Joseph was with them for several years! But she did not even see Joseph as a real person, just someone to use and let go!

Keep in mind what Potiphar's job was. Potiphar was the chief of the executioner for Pharaoh. And raping your wife, Joseph was a dead man walking!

Now think about this for a minute. Joseph did what was right and yet, look at what was happening to him.

Here is the problem for us. We only see part of this story and as we look at the life of Joseph, we tend to see it as unfair. We can't imagine why God would do this to this man who loved Him.

But again, we don't know the whole story and the same is true in our lives. We may never know why things are happening to us this side of eternity, but many times we will.

Remember what Paul said in Romans 8:28, "**And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.**"

We may not see it; we may not feel like things are working out for good, but we can know that they will because God has promised that to us. Thus, no matter what we are going through, may we walk in faith trusting God to work all things together for good!

Look at what happens to Joseph.

VERSES 19-20

Who was Potiphar mad at, Joseph or his wife?

We would think Joseph, but I don't think that is exactly right and I will show you why.

I think Potiphar was put in a difficult situation here. His wife accused Joseph of trying to rape her and yet he knew Joseph and the integrity of this young man, and he knew his wife!

You see, I don't think this was the first time that she did something like this.

And if Potiphar was a eunuch, it would seem she was even more willing to seek out sexual exploits.

The problem here is that Potiphar had to do something and instead of putting Joseph to death, he gave him a life sentence in prison!

Lives were cheap in those days, and it put your slave to death, was nothing. And now with this accusation against Joseph, he should have been put to death, but he wasn't. God spared him and I think the way that Joseph lived before Potiphar, he knew he was a man of integrity, like I have said!

It is as Kidner wrote, ***“Death was the only penalty Joseph could reasonably expect. His reprieve presumably owed much to the respect he had won; and Potiphar’s mingled wrath and restraint may reflect a faint misgiving about the full accuracy of the charge.”***

Think of the situation that Joseph is in. His brothers throw him into a pit wanting to kill him. Instead, they make a profit off of him by selling him to Midianite traders.

They in turn make a profit off of Joseph by selling him in Egypt as a slave to Potiphar.

He serves Potiphar faithfully for a number of years and now he is falsely accused of trying to rape Potiphar's wife.

Thus, he is thrown into prison, this subterranean dungeon, which may have been attached to Potiphar's home. (Genesis 40:3)

At this point, and even before, many would feel, *“What is the use. I don’t know what God is doing, I don’t know what I am doing, but it must be wrong. Look at all that is happening to me all because I was trying to do what God wanted me to do. It is not worth it anymore!”*

Before you travel down that path, listen to what Joseph does, he is a great example of what we are to do, especially in the days we are living in!

VERSES 21-23

This tells me that Joseph was not only a faithful slave for Potiphar, but he was also a faithful prisoner and the **“keeper of the prison.”** the man under Potiphar, elevated Joseph to a place of authority in the prison!

You see, Joseph did not give up because his situation was bad. He stayed strong because he had God’s Word to him, and Joseph believed that what God had promised to him He was more than able to bring to pass! Thus, he served as a prisoner faithfully!

It is a Spurgeon wrote, *“The Lord was with Joseph none the less when he was cast into the prison. He knew God was with him in prison, and therefore he did not sit down sullenly in his sorrow, but he bestirred himself to make the best of his afflicted condition.”*

What an example to us.

Now, how many of you, as you read this story see Joseph in the center of God’s will?

We all should but as we look at the circumstances, it looks like Joseph blew it.

But folks, listen carefully, he didn’t!

How can I know that?

Listen to what we see in the Scriptures about Joseph!

A. In Genesis 39:2 we are told: **“The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.”**

B. In Genesis 39:3 we are told: **“And his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand.”**

C. In Genesis 39:5 we are told: **“So it was, from the time that he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake; and the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had in the house and in the field.”**

D. In Genesis 39:21 we are told: **“But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.”**

E. And in Genesis 39:23 we are told: **“The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph’s authority, because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper.”**

In other words, the Lord was with Joseph in spite of the circumstances that surrounded him. Remember, that is what Paul told us in Romans 8:28, all things are working out for good in our lives!

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“We are assured and know that [God being a partner in their labor] all things work together and are [fitting into a plan] for good to and for those who love God and are called according to [His] design and purpose.”**

Romans 8:28.

God has a plan, He knows what He is doing, and we just need to walk in the Spirit, so we do not do the works of the flesh!

Paul is another example of how we are to live out our faith.

Remember when Paul was in prison in Rome and awaiting to be executed, put to death for his faith in Jesus Christ. He tells us in II Timothy 2:8-10, **“Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”**

In other words, as long as you are walking with the Lord it doesn't matter where you are at, God will use you for His glory and yes, it may not always be easy, but God will give you the strength you need to endure if you look to Him.

It is as Clarke tells us, *“It is but of little consequence where the lot of a servant of God may be cast; like Joseph he is ever employed for his master, and God honours him and prospers his work.”*

GENESIS 40

VERSES 1-4

As we have seen, even when he was put in prison for something that he did not do, Joseph served faithfully and was elevated to care for all the prisoners.

And what we will see here is that God will use the events that happen in people's lives to fulfill His plans and purposes. This is amazing when you think about it.

Here we see two of Pharaoh's servants; the butler who was in charge of Pharaoh's wine and the baker who was in charge of Pharaoh's food, thrown into this prison.

These were very important positions. You see, they not only tasted the drink for the king to make sure it was not poisoned, not only did they cook the food, but they were involved in the ceremonies involving the worship of the Egyptian god Horus. You see, they would bear the wine and carry the ceremonial bread to be offered to this god during various ceremonies.

But something happened that made the king very angry. So much so that he placed both these men in prison.

We don't know what that was all about, but it most likely involved one of these men plotting to kill the king and thus, because he did not know which one was going to do it, he placed them both in prison just to be sure!

Now, who is "**the captain of the guard**" who was overseeing this prison?

We don't have to guess because Genesis 39:2 tells us that it was Potiphar, interestingly enough!

Thus, Potiphar knew the charges against Joseph were false and he treats Joseph kindly and places these two men with Joseph. Again, that is why Potiphar did not put Joseph to death after his wife accused him of raping her!

As I have said, Joseph is in charge, the boss of the prisoners you might say. What is interesting to me is that he does not let that go to his head.

How do I know that?

Because he **SERVES** the butler and baker! (Genesis 40:4)

Folk's, that truly is the heart of a child of God, he will serve others.

Jesus reminds us in Mark 10:45, "**For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.**"

In the church today many have lost that mentality and they are only interested in what they can get, not what they can give to others. How sad.

Jesus said in Mark 9:35, “**And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, ‘If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.’**”

In other words, God has given you a gift, a talent; use it for the building up of the body of Christ.

Joseph served not because he had to, but because he wanted to serve the Lord, it was an honor to serve the Lord in any capacity, in any situation, even when it was not fair!

May we feel the same way!

And what we have seen and will continue to see is that God did bless Joseph for his faithfulness in service. And not only was Joseph blessed but the other prisoners were also blessed by Joseph!

May we use the gifts that God has given to us to serve others, to bless them!

VERSES 5-7

Let me ask you this. Does God give the unsaved dreams?

Many would think that God only gives dreams to believers. But that is not always the case.

God does give dreams to unbelievers, and we can see that with the King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar! And it was Daniel who interpreted those dreams for the King of Babylon.

Also, like in Babylon down the road, dreams were a big part of the Egyptian life. They believed that dreams put them in contact with the spirit world!

And if you had a pair of dreams, that was an indication that they would come to pass.

But here is the problem. What do these dreams or any dreams that they had mean?

They didn't know but they, like the Babylonians will have, they had what you might call dream books that gave the answer to what your dream was all about.

But, being in prison, they did not have access to those who had these books, and, as we will see, they are going to allow this Hebrew man, Joseph to interpret for them. The Egyptians looked down upon the Jews, but what else were they going to do but give this young man a chance to tell them what their dreams meant!

So in the morning, as Joseph comes before these two men, he sees that something is wrong. He asks them, “... **‘Why do you look so sad today?’**” Genesis 40:7.

What is my point?

My point is this. I want you to notice here how Joseph is not self-centered, consumed by all that is happening to him. He could have been angry, bitter, frustrated and blind to what was happening around him because it was all about him.

But that is not what we see in the life of Joseph. He is not self-centered, but he is others centered.

How do I know that?

Because as he saw these two men, he saw the change in the butler and baker, that something was troubling them and was concerned, he had compassion upon them, and he wanted to know why they were so sad.

That means he not only was in tune with what was going on in their lives that day but each and every day and now something had changed, and he recognized it.

And this should just make sense when you think about it. A person filled with anger, bitterness, hate will not care for others because they are focused on themselves.

But Joseph, you might say that he walked in the Spirit because the Fruit of the Spirit flowed from his life.

What do I mean by that?

I mean that we see his love for others. Did they deserve it? No, they did not. But he still loved them in spite of how they were, what they had done or were accused of doing.

Paul put it like this in Galatians 5:22-26, **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”**

You see, the Fruit of the Spirit is *LOVE, AGAPE LOVE*, and that is manifested in these different ways: joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. That is what should flow from our lives, the Fruit of the Spirit!

That is what we see here with Joseph!

Let me share this story with you and you will see what Christian love is all about. You see, especially in the days we are living in when so many Christians are angry, mad and lashing out at the unsaved world, here is a vastly different story. We are told,

On April 6, 2000, Ricky and Toni Sexton were taken hostage inside their Wytheville, Virginia, home by a fugitive couple on a crime spree.

Toni had taken her poodle outside when Dennis Lewis, 37, and Angela Tanner, 20, roared into her driveway, pointed pistols at her, and yelled at her to get back inside the house.

Inside the house, the Sextons turned their hostage experience into an opportunity to demonstrate Christian love.

The Sextons *listened to their captors' troubles, fed them, showed them gospel videos, read to them from the Bible, and prayed and cried with them.*

During negotiations with the police, Ricky Sexton refused his own release when Lewis and Tanner suggested that they might end the standoff by committing suicide.

The standoff had an unusual ending. Before surrendering to the police, Angela Tanner left \$135 and a note for the Sextons that read: "Thank you for your hospitality. We really appreciate it. I hope he gets better. Wish all luck & love. Please accept this. It really is all we have to offer. Love, Angela and Dennis."

Followers of Jesus should never forget the disarming power of Christian love.

- Perfect Illustrations for Every Topic and Occasion

I know that is a strange ending to that story, but the love that they showed this couple who were going to rob them changed their lives. May we watch people to see where they are at, be sensitive to them and listen to what the Lord is showing us, what we need to say or do. Joseph was, it was just part of his life and may it be part of our life as well!

VERSE 8

Because dreams played an important role in Egypt, these men were troubled. They did not know what they meant and when Joseph asked them what is wrong, why they are so sad, they explain to him about these dreams, and they had no one to interpret them!

When Joseph hears this he tells them, "... 'Do not interpretations belong to God. ...'" Joseph wants these men to understand that God alone gives the interpretations to dreams.

This is not about Joseph, but it is about God. God uses Joseph as a vessel to work through, but Joseph does not want the glory, he gives the glory to God, the one who deserves it. That is the way it should be!

The Lord tells us in Isaiah 42:8-9, **“I am the Lord, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images. Behold, the former things have come to pass, And new things I declare; Before they spring forth I tell you of them.”**

And remember what Paul wrote in I Corinthians 1:26-31, **“For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God — and righteousness and sanctification and redemption - that, as it is written, ‘He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.’”**

God gets the glory and if we try to take that from Him, look out!

Now let me also say this. Not every dream we have is a revelation from God. And God speaks to us through His Word most of the time. Does He still use dreams today? Yes, but again, He speaks to us most of the time through His Word!

Remember what Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 5:7, **“For in the multitude of dreams and many words there is also vanity. But fear God.”**

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“For in a multitude of dreams there is futility and worthlessness, and ruin in a flood of words. But [reverently] fear God [revere and worship Him, knowing that He is].”**

The Bible warns us that false prophets use dreams to give weight to their message. We see that in Jeremiah 23:25-29, where we are told, **“I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in My name, saying, “I have dreamed, I have dreamed!” How long will this be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies? Indeed they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart, who try to make My people forget My name by their dreams which everyone tells his neighbor, as their fathers forgot My name for Baal. The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?’ says the Lord. ‘Is not My word like a fire?’ says the Lord, ‘And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?’”**

The leaders and the people were not following the Lord or His Word and thus, they listened to these false prophets who spoke of peace and prosperity but that never came, only judgment! They dreamed a dream and attached that to the Lord, but it was not from the Lord!

And I get the idea that the Word of God was not enough for them, they needed dreams and visions, which lead the people away from the true God to worship Baal.

Now God does give us dreams and visions but that is not the primary source of our diet, it is the Word of God, like I have said! I think so many people are so confused about God because of all these wild dreams, visions, and-so-on that are not found in the Word of God and they are drawing people away from the Lord.

And for those who think dreams and visions supersede the Word of God, think again.

Look at verses 28 and 29 of Jeremiah chapter 23 again, “**The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?’ says the Lord. ‘Is not My word like a fire?’ says the Lord, ‘And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?’**”

These dreams and vision are like chaff when compared to the Word, the wheat which gives us the bread of life!

God’s Word is a fire that will burn up all the lies!

And God’s Word is like a hammer breaking apart the hardness of man’s heart!

God is saying don’t listen to those dreamers but feed upon His Word! That should be our primary diet – ***THE WORD OF GOD!***

VERSES 9-11

The butler, the one who served the king his wine, God spoke to him in a dream with things that were familiar to him. But he had no idea what it meant!

Now Joseph, through the inspiration of God, will tell the butler what this dream means.

VERSES 12-15

To have your head lifted up signifies regaining your dignity, honor, and freedom, just as hanging your head signifies shame and subjection.

And I want you to see how the interpretation of this dream is very specific. God does not give Joseph some vague answer, but He was very specific.

In three days, the butler was going to be restored to his position with Pharaoh.

Folks, only God knows the beginning from the end, and He lets us know ahead of time.

In Isaiah 44:6-8 we are told, **“Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: ‘I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God. And who can proclaim as I do? Then let him declare it and set it in order for Me, Since I appointed the ancient people. And the things that are coming and shall come, Let them show these to them. Do not fear, nor be afraid; Have I not told you from that time, and declared it? You are My witnesses. Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one.’”**

You see, no one else can do this and thus, what God has shown us in His Word, we are His witnesses to the world, and we need to share this with them, pointing them to Jesus!

One other point here that some commentators come down on Joseph for what he does, they say he is lacking faith. I don't think so.

What we see here is that Joseph asks the butler to remember him when he is released in three days. That he would speak with Pharaoh telling him that he did not belong in prison.

Again, I don't believe that Joseph is lacking faith here, trying to help God out, not trusting God?

He was just being wise and taking those steps to see what God was going to do.

Obviously, God gave this man a dream and now God gave Joseph the interpretation, could this be used to get Joseph's release?

It will be but not according to the way we think or in the timeframe we think it should take place. God has a plan and purpose for each of our lives just as He did with Joseph!

VERSES 16-19

You have to love the baker here. He saw the good interpretation for the butler's dream, and he thought he would get a good one as well. ***"Hey Joseph, here is my dream, what does it mean?"*** And as we see, it was not what he wanted to hear!

You see, in three days the baker will be put to death.

That tells me the butler didn't do it, like you thought!

You see, it was the baker who was planning the assassination attempt on Pharaoh!

Thus, the baker will be put to death and the butler will be restored!

What the Egyptians would do to execute people is they beheaded the victim and then impaled them on a stake or what we see here, a **"tree."**

The butler was lifted up in honor and joy while the baker was lifted up off his body, not a good thing!

Boice makes this interesting observation regarding what Joseph did by interpreting both these dreams.

He writes, ***"How many there are who are willing to preach the cupbearer's sermon but are unwilling to preach the baker's sermon!"***

When I read that, I thought how true of a statement that really is.

Joseph could have ignored the bad interpretation, but he would have been wrong.

You see, Joseph was faithful in delivering both the good and bad news and so must we. It is the whole counsel of God and not just what we like or that which is good.

Paul put it like this in Acts 20:26-30 as he shared with the Ephesian elders or pastors,
“Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.”

In other words, he equipped the people to stand strong in the faith so the wolves that were teaching false doctrine will not influence them.

That is my passion as you know and thus, you get the whole council of God!

And folks, there will be times you have to share with people things that they don't like to hear, do it in love but don't negate it just because you might hurt their feelings.

I am sure over the years I have shared things with you that you didn't like, and you may have even been mad at me. But you were not really mad at me, it was God who you were mad with, but you can't get mad at God, so you get mad at me. People have even left the church because they don't like what God's Word has to say.

Be a God pleaser and not a man pleaser!

VERSES 20-23

Egyptian Pharaoh's would grant amnesty on their birthday but most of the time this amnesty was granted on the anniversary of their accession to the throne, which was more important.

Why?

Because this was thought of as the birth of a god! In Egyptian theology the Pharaoh was the incarnation of Ra, the sun god!

So I think that is when this amnesty took place!

And just as Joseph said would take place, the butler was restored, and the baker was put to death.

For Joseph, he was probably counting down those three days until he was released! And as both men are released, the butler is restored to his position and the baker is put to death, as I have said.

And when this happens, for Joseph, *“Today is the day I will be released!”*

But that day went by and nothing.

The next day went by, and the next, and the next, and the next, and the next and nothing!
He is still in that dungeon!

And next time we will see how those days that were going by ended up being two full years!

How forgetful is the butler and do you really want a guy making your wine who is that forgetful? I don't think so!

I do believe that God influenced him or made him forget.

But why did God do that? Doesn't that seem unfair?

The reason is simple. If Joseph was released, the famine would still be in the future.

Thus, Joseph would have been released and probably head home to Canaan and not be part of Pharaoh's kingdom. Thus, the family of Jacob would have died in the coming famine!

One writer put it like this. He wrote, *“Joseph experienced disappointment after disappointment - his brothers’ murderous rejection, evil for doing good in resisting Potiphar’s wife, the withering disappointment from the forgetful cupbearer. Joseph’s life teaches us that disappointments are essential to spiritual growth because they demand faith and resting all hope upon God. As V. Raymond Edman wrote, ‘Delay never thwarts God’s purposes; it only polishes his instrument.’”*

Folks, we may look at a situation we are in now, the difficulties we face and wonder what God is doing, how unfair it is but we don’t see the big picture, but God does!

Rest in Him and you will rest in His peace!

Also, during those times God is growing us, teaching us so that when it’s time, He has prepared not only the work for us, but us for the work.

That is what He did in the life of Joseph. These were not wasted years as some would think.

For Joseph it will be thirteen years of being a slave and being in prison before he is elevated to second in command over all of Egypt, behind only Pharaoh!

He went from the pit to the pinnacle!

As one person said, *“Here Joseph is wronged again. He thought that butler’s kindness might mean his release from prison, but it was not to be. God had another purpose. All men God uses greatly, He first prepares greatly. Few are willing to endure the greatness of God’s preparation. God orders both our steps and stops.”*

May we not forget that just as Joseph didn’t!

That is why even in the unfair situation he was in; he could serve the Lord faithfully.

How about you?