

PHARAOH'S DREAM AND JOSEPH'S ADVANCEMENT

TEXT: GENESIS 41:1-57

INTRODUCTION:

1. People like to read inspiring stories about great men and women who started out in life with practically nothing, but went on to become very successful.
2. Abraham Lincoln's early life was poor and hard. He was born in 1809 in a one-room cabin in rural Kentucky. He was the first member of his family who could read.
3. From a very young age until he was about 15, Abraham Lincoln attended school intermittently, walking several miles each way to learn reading, writing, and arithmetic. He said later that "all his schooling did not amount to one year."
4. There was only one book in the Lincoln family cabin — the Bible. So young Abraham Lincoln read it all the time. That is why he often quoted Scripture in his conversation, and letters, and speeches.
5. Lincoln's son Tad once asked his father why it was so important to attend Sunday School. President Lincoln told him, "Every educated person should know something about the Bible and the Bible stories."
6. Lincoln also said this about the Bible, "In regard to this great book, I have but to say, it is the best gift God has given to man. All the good the Savior gave to the world was communicated through this book. But for it we could not know right from wrong. All things most desirable for man's welfare, here and hereafter, are to be found portrayed in it."
7. Young Abraham Lincoln also borrowed books to read — Aesop's Fables, Pilgrim's Progress, Robinson Crusoe, and the plays of William Shakespeare. He once walked nearly 20 miles to borrow a book from a lawyer.

8. Despite these difficult circumstances, Lincoln applied himself to his studies. He kept reading, and he kept working, and he went on to become one of our greatest presidents.
9. I have read a few biographies of President Lincoln and have enjoyed them very much, but there is another story much more fascinating, and that is the story of Joseph, who went from slave in Genesis 39 to a prisoner in Genesis 40 to overseer over the entire nation of Egypt in Genesis 41.
10. Joseph's trials and troubles should be looked at from both the human standpoint, and the divine standpoint.
11. From the human side Joseph's suffering was due to the false accusations of Potiphar's wife, and then the ingratitude and faulty memory of Pharaoh's chief butler.
12. But from the Divine side these difficult years were permitted for the purpose of training and preparing Joseph for the great work that lay before him.
13. The unusual twists and turns in Joseph's life have been referred to as "the fortuitous concurrence of circumstances" – the cruel jealousy of his brothers, his sale as a slave into Egypt, his faithfulness under temptation, his imprisonment, his interpretation of the chief butler and the chief baker's dreams, his patient endurance in prison; and then the dreams of Pharaoh and the chief butler remembering his faults, etc.
14. These were all threads that linked the pit in Canaan with the palace in Egypt.
15. If we look only at the human side of trials we tend to become discouraged, and perhaps even impatient and irritated and angry.
16. But when we look at our trials from the Divine side see God's hand in everything, and understand Romans 8:28 – "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."

- I. PHARAOH'S DREAM
- II. JOSEPH'S INTERPRETATION
- III. JOSEPH'S INSTALLATION

I. PHARAOH'S DREAM (41:1-13)

1. Two years have passed since Joseph said to Pharaoh's chief butler, "Make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house" (40:14).
2. The chief butler was released from prison and got his job back, but he did not remember Joseph, but forgot all about him (40:23).
3. Joseph had to patiently wait on God for two years. Psalm 105:16-21 says, "Moreover he called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread. He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: Until the time that his word came (until what Joseph had predicted came to pass): the word of the LORD tried him. The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance."
4. Two years passed, and Genesis 41 begins with Pharaoh dreaming (41:1). Pharaoh dreamed two dreams, and these two dreams were connected.
5. In his first dream, "he stood by the river" (41:1), probably the Nile River, the longest river in the world (over 4,000 miles long).
6. In his first dream, he dreamed about fat and lean cows, and in his second dream he dreamed about full and thin ears of corn (41:2-7). There is a parallel – fat cows followed by lean cows; and good corn followed by thin ears of corn.
7. Later on, Joseph explained to Pharaoh, "The dream of Pharaoh is one" (41:25, 26).

8. When Pharaoh awoke, “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” (41:8).
9. Like his two officers in the prison (40:5-8), Pharaoh realized that his twofold dream portended some momentous event. And the fact that he could not understand what would soon take place filled his heart with dread. He was “troubled” (41:8).
10. So Pharaoh sent for his magicians and wise men, but they were unable to interpret his dream (41:8).
11. The magicians and wise men of Egypt were accustomed to interpreting dreams, and here in Pharaoh’s palace, they were given an opportunity to prove their knowledge and skills by interpreting Pharaoh’s dream, but they failed (41:8b).
12. God was showing Pharaoh that all human resources and worldly wisdom are powerless and worthless, and that true wisdom comes only from God.
13. First Corinthians 3:19 says, “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.”
14. The chief butler suddenly remembered what had happened in prison with Joseph. He then confessed his faults and told Pharaoh what had happened two years before, about the young Hebrew who had interpreted his dream and how it had so literally and wonderfully come to pass (41:9-13).
15. W.H. Griffith Thomas said, “How simple and yet how truly remarkable is this link in the chain of circumstances by means of which God fulfilled His purposes for Joseph! On how little does very much often depend!” (*Genesis*).
16. William Cowper said, “God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform”

*God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;*

*He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.*

*Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs
And works His sov'reign will.*

*Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.*

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.*

*His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.*

*Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.*

II. JOSEPH'S INTERPRETATION (41:14-40)

1. "Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon..." (41:14). Notice Joseph got cleaned up to meet Pharaoh, but many Christians today go to church looking like slob!
2. Apparently Pharaoh considered Joseph to be a "wise man," and so he quickly got down to business (41:14, 15).
3. Joseph immediately explained to Pharaoh that his ability to interpret dreams was a gift from God, and "God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace" (41:16).
4. Joseph was polite, but not a flatterer. And Joseph did not seek release from prison as a payment for his interpretation of Pharaoh's dream. Joseph did not take advantage of the occasion.
5. Joseph's words remind us that he was very humble and totally dependent upon God (41:16). Joseph was not at all interested in himself. Joseph's only thought was the glory of God.
6. When he resisted the persistent enticements of Potiphar's wife, Joseph said, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (39:9).
7. In prison, Joseph said to the chief butler and the chief baker, "Do not interpretations belong to God?" (40:8).
8. In Pharaoh's palace, Joseph said to Pharaoh, "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace" (41:16; cf. 41:25, 28, 32, 51, 52).
9. God was everything to Joseph. Is He everything *to you*?
10. When the wise men, and the astrologers, and the magicians, and the soothsayers of Babylon could not interpret King Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days" (Daniel 2:27, 28).

11. If our leaders today would turn to the Scriptures and seek God's face, they would learn what is “shortly” going to come to pass (41:32).
12. Our nation is in desperate need of men like Joseph, and men like Pharaoh who recognized that God was directing Joseph (cf. 41:38).
13. Our country would not be in the mess it’s in if our leaders would follow the principles laid out in God’s Word (cf. Joshua 1:8).
14. Pharaoh told Joseph about his two dreams of the cattle and the corn, and immediately Joseph gave him the interpretation (41:17-32).
15. The two dreams referred to one subject, the double dream indicated the certainty of it (41:32).
16. Seven years of great plenty were to be followed by seven years of famine (41:29-32).
17. Joseph urged Pharaoh to appoint a man (“discreet and wise”) who would put a plan into action to store up one fifth of the food during the good years, thereby having enough food to survive the famine (41:33-36).
18. Joseph did not say a word about himself, nor did he suggest that he considered himself to be the man whom Pharaoh should appoint.
19. Joseph was not thinking about himself at all. Andrew Murray said, “Humility is the displacement of self by the enthronement of God.” And, “Humility is nothing but the disappearance of self in the vision that God is all.” This describes Joseph.
20. Pharaoh quickly saw the wisdom in Joseph’s plan, and immediately agreed to it (41:37, 38). Furthermore, Pharaoh went on to say that Joseph should be the one to head up this new program (41:38-45).
21. Joseph’s experience as overseer in Potiphar’s house prepared him for the much bigger job he would later do for Pharaoh (39:2-5; 41:45-49).
22. Pharaoh was so deeply impressed with Joseph’s wisdom that he said to his servants, “Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the

Spirit of God is?” (41:38). Whatever precisely Pharaoh understood by the “Spirit of God,” it is evident he realized that Joseph was possessed with superhuman ability.

23. We see a very similar situation with Daniel in Babylon. The queen of Babylon said to King Belshazzar, “O king, live forever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed: There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation” (Daniel 5:10-12).
24. How much about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit the queen of Babylon understood is not at all clear, but she knew Daniel had it.
25. Many years ago, I heard a preacher say, “You can call this the filling of the Holy Spirit or the baptism of the Holy Spirit or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; but the most important thing is make sure you have the Holy Spirit!”
26. Joseph certainly had the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
27. For the record, I believe the Bible teaches that all Christians are immediately indwelt by the Holy Spirit when they are saved, but not all Christians are filled with the Holy Spirit.
28. Ephesians 5:18 is a command – “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”
29. God would not command men to be filled if they were already filled. Nowhere in Scripture are men commanded to be indwelt or sealed or baptized by the Holy Spirit. They are command to be filled.
30. W.H. Griffith Thomas said, “Just as sin dulls the mental and moral faculties, so the Spirit of God cleanses and refines them” (*Genesis*).

III. JOSEPH'S INSTALLATION (41:40-57)

1. Joseph's exile was turned into exaltation. The hands that had known the hard toil of a slave were now adorned by the king's ring (41:42).
2. Joseph had his coat of many colors taken away thirteen years earlier when his brothers stripped it off from him in anger and jealousy.
3. Later, he had left his outer garment behind in the hands of Potiphar's wife when he had to flee from her.
4. But now Pharaoh "arrayed him in vestures of fine linen" (41:42).
5. Joseph's feet had been chained in iron fetters, but now a gold chain was put around his neck (41:42b).
6. Before Joseph served Potiphar, and then his fellow prisoners. But now Joseph stood side by side with Pharaoh.
7. Once Joseph was looked down upon by the Egyptians as a lowly Hebrew slave, but now all the people of Egypt were commanded to bow down before him as he rode on the second chariot as the prime minister of Egypt (41:43, 44).
8. All of this took place because Joseph always sought to please God, and because Joseph resisted the temptation to sin. Rather than gratifying the flesh, Joseph sought to glorify God.
9. The LORD says in I Samuel 2:30, "For them that honor me I will honor."
10. Jesus said in John 12:26, "If any man serve me, him will my Father honor."
11. Jesus said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). We see this illustrated in the life of Joseph.

12. Joseph resisted the lustful enticements of Potiphar's wife, and God rewarded him with Asenath, the noble daughter of a prominent Egyptian priest (41:45).
13. Students of typology have pointed out that our Lord Jesus is acquiring a Gentile bride in the present day just as Joseph did in his day.
14. It was a great honor for Pharaoh to give this woman to Joseph, and God blessed this marriage with two sons (41:50-52). Both sons were born before the famine came.
15. Joseph's first son, Manasseh, means, "Forgetting." "God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house" (41:51).
16. Philippians 3:13 says, "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before..."
17. The second son was Ephraim, which means, "Fruitful." "For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction" (41:52).
18. Our Lord said, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16).
19. So Joseph's two sons are "Forgetting" and "Fruitful." J. Vernon McGee called the two boys, "Amnesia and Ambrosia" (*Thru the Bible*).
20. Under Joseph's management, Egypt became the breadbasket of the world. Soon people in other countries heard of it and made plans to visit Egypt (41:47-50, 57; 42:1-3).
21. Notice Joseph "laid up the food in the cities...(in) every city" (41:48). This made it easier to distribute the food when the famine came.
22. As Joseph predicted, "the seven years of plenteousness" came to an end, and the seven years of famine began (41:53, 54).
23. Pharaoh told the hungry people, "Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do" (41:55). Today we tell lost sinners, "Go to Jesus; He is the Bread of Life."

24. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).

25. Genesis 41:56 says, "And the famine was over all the face of the earth."

26. Today in America, there is plenty of food in the stores and in the restaurants and in our kitchens, but there is a famine of Bible knowledge and good Gospel preaching.

CONCLUSION:

1. Joseph became the savior of the land of Egypt. He is a type of Christ, "the Saviour of the world" (John 4:42).
2. When the people cried out for bread, Pharaoh said to them, "Go to Joseph; what he saith to you, do" (41:55).
3. And so they came to him, and Joseph saved them (physically).
4. We have a much greater savior than Joseph. He saves us spiritually.
5. And if a sinner wants to know how to be saved from the guilt of sin and how to have the assurance of eternal life, then he must go to the Lord Jesus Christ, because the Bible says, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).