

The Imprisonment of Joseph

Genesis 40:1-23

- I. THE PROMOTION OF JOSEPH (Genesis 40:1-4)
 - A. The Offence of the King's Servants (Genesis 40:1)
 1. The timing of the offence
 - a. "After these things" – This points back to Genesis 39:21-23, where Joseph is promoted to watching over the prisoners and all of the activities of the prison.
 - b. This demonstrates the beauty of God's timing. One of these men is going to be the way to get Joseph out of this prison and into authority under Pharaoh in Egypt. If God had not timed and waited till Joseph was ruling in the prison, Joseph would never have ruled in Egypt (Isaiah 55:8-9).
 2. The offenders
 - a. The chief butler
 - b. The chief baker
 - B. The Wrath of Pharaoh (Genesis 40:2)
 1. The position of these chiefs – these men were high officials in Pharaoh's government, and in some way – the Bible doesn't specify – they incurred the wrath of their boss and as a result were imprisoned.
 2. The effects of this wrath – This eventually influenced the well-being of Joseph. We are reminded of Psalm 76:10 (Psalm 76:10).
 - C. The Imprisonment of the Servants (Genesis 40:3)
 1. Placed in ward in the house of the captain of the guard,
 2. In the place where Joseph was bound.
 - a. They were placed in the very same prison as Joseph.
 - b. These men would have much information concerning the workings of the Egyptian government.
 - (1) This would greatly help Joseph later when he is elevated to high office in the government.
 - (2) This was once again the providential hand of God.

- (3) God used Joseph's prison experience to train him for higher office.
- (4) Note: Our circumstances may very distressing and vexing, but God can use those circumstances in a wonderful way to train and prepare us for future service and events (Psalm 107, esp. v. 43).
- c. Note: Joseph as a type of Christ: Jesus Christ in prison – “He was taken from prison and from judgment” (Isaiah 53:8; Matthew 27:15-25)

D. The Warden in the Promotion (Genesis 40:3-4)

1. The second promotion for Joseph
 - a. “*The captain of the guard charged Joseph with them*” (Genesis 40:4)
 - b. Joseph had already been promoted earlier in prison by the “*keeper of the prison*” (Genesis 39:22, 23); now he is promoted by the “*captain of the guard.*”
2. The identification of the warden
 - a. Who is this “*captain of the guard*”?
 - (1) He is none other than Potiphar (see Genesis 39:1).
 - (2) Potiphar as “*captain of the guard*” is responsible for the king's protection and for taking care of those who are in disfavour with the king.
 - b. The prison of the warden
 - (1) As we noted in the previous chapter, the prison where Joseph is placed was not just any normal regular prison but a special one for those that offended the king.
 - (2) It was the king's prison; that is, it was for the king's enemies.
 - (3) So, the “*captain of the guard*” had very important responsibilities.
3. The vindication by the warden
 - a. The trust of the warden – Because these prisoners were so important, Potiphar wouldn't trust just anyone with them. For if something happened to the prisoners that the king did not like, it could mean the end of Potiphar.
 - b. The belief of the warden – Thus we see in Potiphar appointing Joseph to the job, he clearly vindicated Joseph of the alleged crime against his wife. He put Joseph in prison but did not execute Joseph, which would have been a normal punishment for a husband that fully believed his wife and for a slave doing such a thing. Apparently, Potiphar trusted the character of Joseph more than his wife and so much, so he left him in charge of two high profile prisoners (Proverbs 16:7).

II. THE PERFORMANCE OF JOSEPH (Genesis 40:4-8)

A. The Spirit of His Performance (Genesis 40:3, 4)

1. His willingness despite lack of respect (Genesis 40:4)
 - a. Joseph had been mistreated, yet he continued to serve. He had been mistreated by his brothers, by Potiphar's wife and yes by Potiphar himself.
 - b. Some refuse to serve because they were slighted or "mistreated" in previous service. You will not serve much if your service is dependent on men's praise (Psalm 75:6-7).
2. His willingness despite lack of rank (Genesis 40:3)
 - a. Joseph served faithfully in Egypt despite his low rank. He was a slave in Potiphar's house but still served well.
 - b. Now as a prisoner, which is at a lower position than what he had in Potiphar's house, he is still serving well. In fact, he went lower before going higher.
 - c. Some cannot serve unless they have a high rank. They refuse to serve in a lowly capacity, only wanting to serve on the stage with bright lights shining on them.
3. His willingness despite lack of results
 - a. Joseph was willing to interpret the dreams of the butler and baker even though his own dreams had not had any results yet (Genesis 37:5-10).
 - b. Many will not serve because their past service had poor results, their dreams and plans had little to no results. It is not the way they thought it should be (2 Kings 5:11).
 - c. Joseph was not the only Old Testament character to face prison and ill treatment.
 - (1) Jeremiah was imprisoned for speaking the word of God (Jeremiah 26:7, 8; Jeremiah 37:14; Jeremiah 38:1-13, 28).
 - (2) Daniel in the den of lions (Daniel 6:10-22)
 - (3) New Testament examples:
 - (a) Peter (Acts 12:1-11)
 - (b) Paul and Silas (Acts 16:22-30)

B. The Attentiveness in His Performance (Genesis 40:6, 7)

1. The time of the attentiveness
 - a. "*Joseph came in unto them in the morning*" (Genesis 40:6)
 - b. Note: Joseph did not wait until late in the day to check on them.
 - c. He came in the morning. He showed some earnest interest in their well-being.

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2. The thoroughness of his attentiveness
 - a. *“Wherefore look ye so sadly today?”* (Genesis 40:7).
 - b. When Joseph checked on these two prisoners, he did a complete job.
 - c. He did more than check to see if they were still there and give them their food and water. He took time to examine their countenance. When they looked sad, he inquired. Unfortunately, today we briefly give one another a glance or a nod. We don’t take the time to notice the countenance and demeanor of the other individual. The countenance says much about the other person (Genesis 4:5-6; Genesis 31:2-5; Numbers 6:26; Nehemiah 2:1-3; Note: Psalm 42 and Psalm 43).
- C. The LORD in his Performance (Genesis 40:8)
1. Honour for the Lord’s accuracy
 - a. *“Do not interpretations belong to God?”*
 - b. Joseph gives honour to God in that He is the one with the wisdom to give the interpretation to the dreams (Genesis 41:15-16; Job 33:15-16; Daniel 2:11, 28, 47).
 2. Honour to the Lord despite the pain
 - a. Joseph would honour God despite the pain of his circumstances.
 - b. Many people will sing God’s praises in the good times. But if we are going to truly honour God, we must do so not only in the good times but also in the bad times (Matthew 5:45).
 3. Honour to the Lord despite the heathen
 - a. Joseph honoured God in front of those that did not serve God.
 - b. Just because his prisoners worshipped heathen idols was no reason for Joseph to keep quiet about the true God.
 - c. So often Christians become quiet about honouring God around people not sympathetic to God or that serve God. This ought not be, that is the place that needs to hear about God the most and for Him to be honoured (Psalm 9:1; Psalm 111:1; Psalm 138:1).
- III. THE PREDICTIONS OF JOSEPH (Genesis 40:5, 9-23)
- A. The Dream of the Butler (Genesis 40:5, 9-15)
1. The butler had a dream (Genesis 40:5, 9-11)
 - a. A vine was before him (Genesis 40:9)
 - b. It was though the vine budded and blossoms shot forth with clusters that brought forth ripe grapes (Genesis 40:10)
 - c. The he saw Pharaoh’s cup in his hand (Genesis 40:11)

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- d. He pressed the grapes into Pharaoh's cup and gave it into Pharaoh's hand (Genesis 40:11)
 2. The interpretation of the butler's dream (Genesis 40:12-13)
 - a. Three branches equal three days (Genesis 40:12)
 - b. Within three days restoration unto the butler's place would be made (Genesis 40:13)
 - c. He would deliver Pharaoh's cup yet again, after the former manner (Genesis 40:13)
 3. The request of Joseph (Genesis 40:14-15)
 - a. The request for kindness (Genesis 40:14)
 - (1) Think on me when it shall be well with thee.
 - (2) Make mention of me unto Pharaoh.
 - b. The perversion of justice upon Joseph (Genesis 40:15)
 - (1) Joseph was stolen away out of his land.
 - (2) Even in Egypt, Joseph had done nothing worthy of imprisonment.
- B. The Dream of the Baker (Genesis 40:5, 16-19)
1. The baker had a dream (Genesis 40:5)
 2. The joy of the baker (Genesis 40:16)
 - a. The baker is thrilled to hear the butler's dream interpreted and expects a similar outcome.
 - b. His joy will be short lived.
 3. The dream of the baker (Genesis 40:16-17)
 - a. The baker had three white baskets on his head (Genesis 40:16).
 - b. In the upper most basket there were all manner of bakemeats for Pharaoh (Genesis 40:17).
 - c. Then came birds and did eat them out of the basket upon his head (Genesis 40:17).
 4. The interpretation of his dream (Genesis 40:18-19)
 - a. The three baskets are three days (Genesis 40:18)
 - b. The removal of bakemeats pictures the loss of life and responsibilities.

- c. Within three days Pharaoh would hang the baker from a tree (Genesis 40:19).
- d. The birds would eat his flesh (Genesis 40:19).

C. The Fulfillment of the Dreams (Genesis 40:20-23)

1. The Pharaoh's Birthday (Genesis 40:20)

- a. The third day – The day appointed for the fulfillment of the prophecies.
- b. Pharaoh made a feast unto all his servants.

2. The Fulfillment of Prophecy (Genesis 40:21-22)

- a. The chief butler (Genesis 40:21)
 - (1) Restored by Pharaoh
 - (2) He would place the cup into Pharaoh's hand.
- b. The chief baker (Genesis 40:22)
 - (1) Hanged from a tree.
 - (2) Just as Joseph had interpreted.
 - (a) Note: This is one of two instances where birthdays are specifically mentioned in the Bible.
 - i. Both cases a king makes a feast and in both cases a man is killed.
 - ii. Both are punishments invoked upon a royalty's birthday and have to do with the head. In one case a man is beheaded and in the other a man is hung.
 - iii. The baker is killed here and the other is Herod's birthday when John the Baptist is beheaded (Mark 6:25).

3. The Forgetting of Joseph (Genesis 40:23)