

Joseph Interpreted the Dream of the Butler

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to depend on the Lord to guide them in whatever work the Lord has for them to do. We saw that the Lord blessed the work of Joseph as he assigned various tasks to the other prisoners in the prison. In this topic, we will see that Joseph interpreted the dream of the butler of the Pharaoh of Egypt.

Genesis 40:1-4 says, “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.” Although Joseph was in prison, the Lord had put him in a position where he was responsible for all of the prisoners. One day, two new prisoners arrived at the prison because they had offended the king of Egypt. These two men were the chief butler and the chief baker of Pharaoh. The butler, or cupbearer, was the one who tasted the water and other drinks of Pharaoh before he drank them to make certain that no one had placed any poison in the water or other drink. As a result, it was a job with great responsibility because that person helped protect the life of the Pharaoh. The job of the chief baker was to prepare bread for the king and make certain it was safe to eat.

Joseph was given the responsibility for the care of these men by the captain of the guard. Joseph served these two men. The word translated “served” means to *serve* or *minister to someone who held a high position* or *to serve the Lord as a priest*. Here, we see that Joseph chose to serve these two and provide them with all of their needs while they were in the prison. These two men spent a period of time in the prison. However, Joseph did more than just serve these men. Genesis 40:5-8 says, “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. 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.’” Here, we see that Joseph also took time to encourage them.

One night, both of the men had a dream. In this case, we see that both of these dreams had a meaning and an interpretation. This meant that the dreams had been given by God and had a specific meaning. However, the butler and the baker did not have any idea what their dreams might mean. Joseph demonstrated that his service of these men

included much more than just taking care of their needs. When Joseph came to them in the morning, the first thing he noticed was that they both were sad. Many people just ignore others when they look sad. They figure that the sadness which can be seen in others is not their problem, so they have no concern for the people. In contrast, Joseph had a great concern for these two men, so he asked them why they looked so sad. Joseph had compassion and he wanted to know the cause of the sadness so that he could do whatever possible to encourage these two men.

The butler and the baker explained to Joseph that they had each had a dream during the night. Both dreams had been so clear and vivid that they could remember all of the details of each of their dreams. Then, they explained that their problem was the fact that there was no interpreter who could interpret their dreams. Joseph immediately responded to them by saying, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell *them* to me, please.” Here, we see that Joseph explained to the butler and the baker the fact that God is the only true source for the interpretation of dreams. Two years later, we see that he explained the same thing to the Pharaoh of Egypt. Genesis 41:15-16 says, “And Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘I have had a dream, and *there is* no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you *that* you can understand a dream, to interpret it.’ So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, ‘*It is* not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace.’” Joseph was ready to serve the butler and the baker, just as he was later ready to serve Pharaoh.

With the encouragement from Joseph, the chief butler was ready to tell his dream to Joseph. Genesis 40:9-11 says, “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.’” As mentioned previously, the most important work of the chief butler was to taste the things that Pharaoh would drink before Pharaoh drank them so no one could poison him. As a result, the dream of the chief butler was about a vine, as the Lord wanted to make this dream so clear to the butler that he could remember the exact details to tell Joseph.

In the dream, he had seen a grape vine. This vine had three branches on it. Each of the three branches of the vine suddenly started to bud. First, the blossoms appeared on each branch of the vine. Then, those blossoms shot up and developed into clusters of grapes on each of the branches. This dream was very easy for the butler to remember because he saw the grapes in each cluster continue to grow until they became ripe grapes. God allowed this dream to continue until the entire process, from the branches budding until they became ripe clusters of grapes, was clear to the butler. In the previous years, the butler had probably watched the growth and development of many fields of grapes because of the fact that he was the one who was going to taste the juice from the grapes before he gave the grape juice or wine to Pharaoh.

However, in this dream, the butler also saw that he had the cup of Pharaoh in his hand.

He took the grapes off the branches of the vine and squeezed them until the grape juice came out of them and ran into the cup of Pharaoh. Fresh squeezed juice is the best juice from any fruit. Since Pharaoh was the ruler of Egypt, the butler had tasted this juice for Pharaoh many times during the period he had been the chief butler. Finally, in his dream, he had placed the cup in the king's hand. This meant the dream included all of the main events, from the shooting forth of the buds, to the development and ripening of the fruit, to the squeezing of the juice into the cup of Pharaoh, to the tasting of the juice by the butler, to the presentation of the cup to the king, so he could drink and enjoy the fresh juice the butler had tested for him. That work was a very important responsibility. Pharaoh knew that the person who had that job was actually protecting his life each time he gave the king something to drink. With such a vivid dream, the chief butler really wanted to know the meaning of the dream.

Genesis 40:12-15 says, "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. 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.'" Joseph had made it clear to the butler that the Lord is the One who is able to interpret dreams. This told the butler that Joseph was going to depend on the Lord to give him the interpretation of that particular dream. Then, Joseph began to explain the meaning of the dream to the butler.

The Lord showed Joseph that the three branches stood for the fact that this dream would be fulfilled in three days. The fact that Pharaoh would lift up the head of the butler meant that the king was going to restore him to his position as the chief butler. He would again begin to serve the king by tasting both the things he drank and the food he ate so the king could be sure that his food and drink were safe and would not poison him. That was great news to the butler, and he was probably very excited for the next three days as he waited for this event to happen.

However, Joseph also made four requests of the butler. First, Joseph asked the butler to remember him when it went well for the butler. Second, Joseph asked the butler to please show kindness to him. Third, Joseph asked the butler to speak to Pharaoh on his behalf. Fourth, he asked the butler to do what he could to get Joseph out of the prison. Joseph had just told the butler that he would be restored to his former position in only three days. Joseph had spent several years in the prison and described it as the dungeon. The word translated "dungeon" is used sixty-nine times in the Old Testament. Forty-two of those times, it is translated "pit" and eleven of those times, it is translated "dungeon". Sometimes a deep pit was used as a dungeon to prevent the escape of prisoners. That could be either a dry pit, or, as in the case of Jeremiah, a miry pit with mud in the bottom. Jeremiah 38:6 says, "So they took Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the king's son, which *was* in the court of the prison, and they let Jeremiah down with

ropes. And in the dungeon *there was* no water, but mire. So Jeremiah sank in the mire.”

That meant that Joseph may have suffered from the heat during the day and the cold during the colder months at night for several years. Life in such a prison would have been very difficult. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that life for Joseph was not easy during those years, but his trust was in the Lord even in a very difficult situation. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn how the Lord was working in Joseph’s life even during those years.