

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

“Dream On!”

Genesis 40:1-23

2003

Introduction

George Fox, the famous author of Foxes Book of Martyrs, once said:

“There are three sorts of dreams:

1. A multitude of business sometimes cases dreams (Eccl 5:3)
2. Then there are the whisperings of Satan in the night-season.
3. Finally, there are the speakings of God to man.”

Some 11 years earlier, in Joseph’s youth, he had dreamed two separate dreams:

1. One where his brother's sheaves of wheat bowed down to his.
2. The other where the sun and the moon and the eleven stars bowed down to him.

The meaning of these dreams seemed obvious at the time: God was going to elevate Joseph above his brothers and even his own father and mother.

But from behind the bars of his prison cell, Joseph must have wondered what sort of dreams he had actually had so many years earlier.

I The Prologue

A. The king of Egypt was **offended**: [Verse 1-2]

1. By the chief cupbearer [in charge of the Pharaoh’s wine and beverages]
 2. By the chief baker [in charge of the Pharaoh’s food]
- Both the cupbearer and baker held very important and trusted positions in Pharaoh’s court since poisoning was a very real threat to the king.

Offended = Chata' (khaw-taw') = “To sin against”

This same Hebrew word is found in Genesis 39:10:

“How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?”

Obviously, the cupbearer and baker were not guilty of some minor indiscretion or inadvertent offense against Pharaoh, but they committed some grievous sin against him. And while we don’t know the actual offense committed by these two officers, it was serious enough that ...

B. The king was **angry** with them [Verse 3-4a]

Angry = Qatsaph (kaw-tsaf') = “To burst out in rage”

1. He put them in custody
 - a. In the house of the captain of the guard
 - b. In the prison where **Joseph** was confined

If you recall from our study last week in Genesis 39:20, the captain of the guard was none other than Potiphar!

In verse 7 the butler and the baker are reported to be kept with Joseph “in his master’s house.”

So it appears that the prison was in the dungeon under Potiphar’s house.

2. He assigned them to the captain of the guard

a. Who assigned them to Joseph

Assigned = Paqad (paw-kad') = “To oversee or care for”

Potiphar placed these two officials under Joseph’s authority, evidencing his continued confidence in Joseph’s integrity and abilities.

b. And Joseph **attended** them

Attended = Sharath (shaw-rath') = “To wait on as a servant”

Notice: Joseph isn’t consumed with the injustice of his situation. He didn’t go on a hunger strike. He wasn’t consumed by bitterness. He didn’t spiral into depression. Instead, he chose to focus his attention on serving those around him.

Serving others had two very beneficial effects on Joseph:

1. It kept him from wallowing in self-pity.

It is difficult to feel sorry for yourself when serving others.

Mark 10:45 “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

2. It paved the way for his ultimate deliverance.

If Joseph hadn’t served the Cupbearer and Baker:

He would have never heard and interpreted their dreams.

If he hadn’t interpreted their dreams, he would have never interpreted Pharaoh’s dreams.

And if he hadn’t interpreted Pharaoh’s dreams, he would have never been placed in a position to deliver the covenant people of God.

And if hadn’t delivered the covenant people of God, the Messiah never would have come to save us from our sins!

Remarkably, our salvation was, in part, tied to Joseph’s willingness to serve his fellow prisoners when others may have been swirling in depression, asking “Why me, God?”

II The Dreams

A. The cupbearer and baker had a **dream** [Verse 4b-5]

1. Each in the same night

2. Each with a meaning of its own

This was not a typical dream. It was a prophetic revelation from God.

Application:

The Bible indicates that God reveals His will to believers through a variety of means including: His written His Word (2 Tim 3:16-17), prompting by the Holy Spirit, godly counsel, circumstances, and dreams and visions (Joel 2:28).

Job 33:14-18 “For God does speak—now one way, now another -- though man may not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men as they slumber in their beds, 16 he may speak in their ears and terrify them with warnings, to turn man from wrongdoing and keep him from pride, to preserve his soul from the pit, his life from perishing by the sword.”

But not every dream is a revelation from God. So we must test our dreams, and every other form of revelation or teaching, against the revealed will of God recorded in His Word. Anything that contradicts Scripture must be rejected.

B. The cupbearer and baker were **dejected** [Verse 6-8]

Dejected = za` aph = “To be sad [Neh 2:1-2] or troubled [Gen 41:8; Dan 7:15]”

1. Joseph took **notice** of their condition

Joseph could have easily become mired in self-pity. Instead, one day he takes notice of the fact that the Cupbearer and Baker looked uncharacteristically discouraged and immediately discerned that something was wrong.

Application:

One of the keys to the Spirit-filled life is to be an others-centered person. Phil 2:4 “Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

Definition of the Spirit-filled life (Simeon’s example in Luke 2:25-35):
Being in the right place at the right time, saying/doing the right things.

2. Joseph **asked** about their situation

a. There was no one to interpret the dreams

These Egyptian officials believed that their dreams had significant predictive meaning. Unfortunately, they were unable to make sense of their unique dreams.

Joseph’s absolute confidence tells us a great deal about his spiritual life.

Gen 41:16 “I cannot do it,” Joseph replied to Pharaoh, “but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires.”

3. Joseph **pointed** them to God

Illustration: Paul in prison

There is a remarkable parallel between the Joseph’s life and the life of Paul:

1. Both were men called by God for ministry
2. Both were men of great character and integrity

3. Both were unjustly imprisoned
4. Both experienced a series of divine appointments during their respective imprisonments that resulted in great blessings to the world:
 - a. Paul's imprisonment gave Paul time to write the prison epistles including; Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.
 - b. Paul's imprisonment served to advance the gospel (Phil 1:12)
 - c. Paul's imprisonment gave him the privilege of proclaiming the gospel throughout the entire praetorian guard (Phil 1:13)
 - d. Paul's imprisonment encouraged other believers to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly (Phil 1:14).

III The Interpretations

A. The cupbearer **told** Joseph his dream [Verse 9-11]

1. He saw a vine with three branches
2. The vine budded, blossomed and bore fruit
3. He squeezed the grapes into Pharaoh's cup

The cupbearer's eagerness to relate his dream to Joseph tells us a great deal about the confidence and trust that Joseph's life inspired in those around him.

Have you ever been around a Christian who was so kind, compassionate and intimate with God that you felt a greater freedom than normal to share your life and troubles with that person? Joseph was such a man!

B. Joseph **interpreted** the cupbearer's dream [Verse 12-13]

1. In 3 days you will be restored

Joseph did not, as is often done, give nebulous and vague predictions:

Three branches: Timing

Vine, grapes and the cup of Pharaoh: Circumstances

In just a short three days, everyone would decisively know whether Joseph's interpretation was accurate or not.

Illustration: The daily horoscope

Deut 18:21-22 "You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him."

C. Joseph made a request: [Verse 14-15]

1. **Remember** me

Remember = Zakar = "To think of"

He asked the Cupbearer to remember the injustice of his imprisonment.

Joseph correctly assumed that the Cupbearer would somehow be the avenue of his release from prison.

2. Show me kindness

Kindness = Checed = “Favor or mercy”

Josh 2:11-12 “Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you.”

3. **Mention** me to Pharaoh

Mention = Zakar = “To bring to remembrance”

Luke 23:41-42 “We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

4. Get me out of prison

While content to remain in the dungeon for as long as God willed, Joseph also made every effort to seek his release through every legitimate channel.

Prov 16:9 “In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.”

D. The baker told Joseph his dream [Verse 16-17]

The baker was encouraged by Joseph’s favorable interpretation of the cupbearer’s dream. And so he eagerly shares his dream with Joseph in hopes of an equally optimistic forecast for his own future.

1. He saw 3 baskets of bread on his head
2. The birds were eating the bread

E. Joseph **interpreted** the baker’s dream [Verse 18-19]

1. In 3 days you will be beheaded and hung on a **tree**

Tree = `ets (ates) = “Gallows”

Gal 3:13-14 “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”

2. The birds will eat away your flesh

Flesh = Basar = “Body or person”

"How many there are who are willing to preach the cupbearer’s sermon but are unwilling to preach the baker’s sermon!" (Boice)

But Joseph was just as faithful to deliver the heavy message as he was to deliver the happy message.

Acts 20:26-27 “Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.”

IV The Fulfillment

A. Pharaoh’s birthday was on the 3rd day [Verse 20]

1. He gave a **feast** for his officials

Feast = Mishteh = “A banquet”

The three days of waiting must have been agonizing for both the Cupbearer and the Baker – but obviously more so for the Baker.

B. Pharaoh lifted the head of the cupbearer and baker [Verse 21-22]

1. He **restored** the cupbearer to his position

2. He **hanged** the chief baker

Ps 105:18-19 “They bruised his feet with shackles, his neck was put in irons, till what he foretold came to pass, till the word of the LORD proved him true.”

Application:

These two dreams and their interpretations foreshadow the Good News of the gospel! And like Joseph, we are called to faithfully deliver the message of God in its entirety:

1. Both the butler and the baker had “sinned” against their master and had rightfully incurred his wrath.
2. Both awaited the condemnation they deserved.
3. Both were judged by their master

One was pardoned, restored to his position and granted permission to enjoy a great feast at his master’s table.

The other was ejected from the presence of the king and received a death penalty.

Likewise, all mankind is guilty of sin (Rom 3:23)

We are all condemned to death for our sin (Rom 6:23)

But by God’s grace, we are gifted with grace for pardon (Eph 2:8-9)

C. Pharaoh was never informed of Joseph [Verse 23]

1. The chief cupbearer **forgot** Joseph

Forgot = Shakach = “To mislay or be oblivious of”

I can only imagine Joseph's thoughts.

- A couple of days go by: "Certainly they are coming for me soon"

- A few weeks pass: "They still might come"

- Then the months slip on to years: But no news comes, and Joseph’s hopes for deliverance through the cupbearer gradually fade away.

Application:

Ps 60:11-12 “... the help of man is worthless. With God we will gain the victory ...”

The only word that will never be broken is God's word. The only One faithful to His promises 100% of the time is God. The only one in whom we can place our complete trust in and know that we will never be disappointed is God Himself.

Prov 3:5-6 “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”

Prov 13:12 “Hope deferred makes the heart sick ...”

Application:

Those two years spent in Potiphar’s prison must have been the darkest days of Joseph’s life. Possibly you are in some dark days right now.

Ps 13:1-2 “How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart?”

Ps 27:13-14 “I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.”

Conclusion

What was God’s purpose in orchestrating Joseph’s life the way He did?

1. To prepare Joseph for service

All men God uses greatly, He first prepares greatly.

James 1:2-4 “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

2. To maximize His glory and praise!

It was no coincidence that Joseph was in Egypt. It was no coincidence that Joseph was in jail. It was no coincidence that Pharaoh's servants offended him. It was no coincidence that they were placed under Joseph's care. God orchestrated these things very carefully in order to heighten and maximize His glory.

3. To foreshadow the work of Jesus Christ. Like Joseph, Jesus Christ was:
 - a. Sold by his brothers for the price of a slave
 - b. Falsely accused of a crime he didn’t commit
 - c. Eventually, was raised up as a deliverer of the people of God

How was Joseph able to endure these 13 years of injustice?

1. He knew that God was with him

Twice in Gen 39 we were told that God was with Joseph (Gen 39:3, 21).

Heb 13:5 “God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”

2. He believed the promises of God

He hadn't forgotten the two dreams which he had had as a young boy in the land of Canaan (Genesis 37:5-11). Joseph knew that in order for his dreams to be fulfilled, God was going to have to deliver him.

Rom 4:19-22 "Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised."

3. He lived a life of service to others

2 Cor 4:5 "For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake."

4. He lived life of contentment

Phil 4:12-13 "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation ... I can do everything through him who gives me strength."