

Joseph Interpreted the Dream of the Baker

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that Joseph experienced a very difficult life in prison for several years; yet, he faithfully served the Lord and others during those years. In this topic, we will see that the baker also asked Joseph to interpret his dream.

The baker had heard Joseph interpret the dream of the butler and so, he decided to tell his dream to Joseph. We read in Genesis 40:16-17 that, “When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said to Joseph, ‘I also *was* in my dream, and there *were* three white baskets on my head. In the uppermost basket *were* all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head.’” We learn that the Lord even guided the two men as to which of them should be first to tell their dreams to Joseph. If the baker would have told his dream first, the butler probably would not have told his dream to Joseph. Both the baker and the butler wanted to hear a good interpretation from their dreams. The butler had received a very good message as Joseph explained the meaning of his dream. That was why the baker was ready to tell his dream to Joseph.

The chief baker was the man who had been responsible for at least all of the bread and other baked goods that were prepared for Pharaoh. He may have been in charge of all of the food that was prepared for and eaten by the family of Pharaoh. The dream of the baker had also been very vivid, so, he remembered all of the details of his dream as well. The fact that he mentioned there were three white baskets on his head in the dream showed that he remembered the details, including the color of the baskets. In many countries of the world, people carry baskets and similar things on their heads. These may even be stacked one on top of another. This helps to prevent back injuries when carrying heavy loads.

The baker said that the top basket, of the three baskets, was filled with all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh. Since the chief baker was responsible for all of the baked goods the king and his family ate, the chief had to be someone Pharaoh could trust so that no enemy would conspire with the baker to poison the baked goods of the king. However, something very different happened to the baked goods of the baker than had happened to the grapes of the butler. Since that was the top basket, the birds landed on the basket and ate the baked goods out of the basket. That may have been the reason the baker was afraid to tell his dream first. However, the good interpretation of the dream of the butler encouraged him to also tell his dream. There were some things in their dreams that were similar. They both had three things. The butler had three cups and the baker had three baskets. The butler squeezed grape juice into the cups and the baker prepared baked goods for Pharaoh.

Genesis 40:18-19 tells us the interpretation God gave Joseph regarding this second dream. Those verses say, “So Joseph answered and said, ‘This *is* the interpretation of it: The three baskets *are* three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh from you.’” Suddenly, we see that the similarities between the two dreams stopped. The interpretation of this dream was not a message that brought happiness to the baker. Instead, this dream was a message about the coming death of the baker. Joseph was faithful as he told the meaning of this dream and did not try to give the baker false hope. Instead, his message gave the baker three days to prepare for his death. That meant that he had only three days to learn about the true and living God that Joseph knew could give him eternal life. That gave him the same choices that the two thieves on the two crosses with Jesus had. He could learn how to have forgiveness by God and eternal life, or he could ignore the warning and experience judgment in just three days. We are not told which choice he made that day. However, we also need to speak the truth in love to those who are rejecting Christ.

Joseph had already been serving both men and they knew that he cared for them. People want to hear the truth spoken to them in love. In this case, that meant the baker had time to prepare. Joseph told the baker that Pharaoh would also change his situation in three days. However, he would not restore the baker to his former position. Instead, the king would hang him on a tree in three days. His body would be left hanging after he died and the birds would come and eat the flesh of his body. This was not the good news that the baker had hoped to hear. Instead, it was a very painful message for him because he knew that he only had three days to live. However, it also gave him the opportunity to learn about God from Joseph.

We go on to read, in Genesis 40:20-23, “Now it came to pass on the third day, *which was* Pharaoh’s birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants. Then he restored the chief butler to his butlership again, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand. But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them. Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.” These verses show us how the interpretation of the dreams by Joseph was fulfilled by Pharaoh, even though he knew nothing about the dreams. The third day was the birthday of Pharaoh. He decided to have a feast for all of his servants. This was a birthday feast, but we see that Pharaoh also used this time to give a warning to those servants.

While all of the servants were gathered for the feast, the king had the butler and the baker brought from the prison. The word translated “lifted up” means to *call attention to the person or people who are lifted up*. Pharaoh called attention to both of these men. He honored the butler by restoring the chief butler to his position. This helped all of the servants realize that the king could honor a person by restoring their position. He made this a very public honor by placing his cup in the hand of the chief butler. Then, Pharaoh called attention to the chief baker. However, he did something very different to him. He

had the chief baker publicly hanged, so, all of the servants were given a warning that made it clear that Pharaoh had the power of life and death over his servants. Those he chose to honor would be honored and those he chose to kill would be put to death. This made it very clear to the servants that they better serve Pharaoh in such a way that he would be pleased with their work.

Joseph had interpreted the dreams of both men very accurately. The chief butler should have been very thankful for the fact that Joseph had given him peace by telling him he would be restored to his position on the third day. Joseph had asked the chief butler to do four things for him when he was restored to his former position. First, Joseph had asked the butler to remember him when it went well for him. However, we read that the butler did not remember Joseph but instead forgot him. Many people are like the butler. Luke 17:12-18 says, “Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up *their* voices and said, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!’ So when He saw *them*, He said to them, ‘Go, show yourselves to the priests.’ And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on *his* face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, ‘Were there not ten cleansed? But where *are* the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?’” Here, we see that the butler was like the nine lepers. He did not show his thanks by remembering Joseph.

The fact that the butler did not remember Joseph also meant that he did not do these three other things. Joseph had also asked the butler to show kindness to him, to speak to Pharaoh on his behalf, and get him out of the prison. The butler had been honored and restored to his position. He was able to enjoy his life again. It was a life of ease and comfort because he was in the house of Pharaoh so he could taste the things that Pharaoh ate and drank in the comfort of the palace. However, the fact that he forgot Joseph meant that Joseph had to suffer in the prison for an additional two full years. Even though the Lord was blessing Joseph in the prison, the conditions were still very difficult there. He had to suffer from both the heat and the cold with very little protection because the butler forgot him.

Joseph later told his brothers, in Genesis 50:19-20, “Joseph said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for *am* I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive.’” Joseph realized that everything that had happened to him was allowed by God to prepare him for the great responsibility the Lord would later bring into his life. Although Romans 8:28-29 was not written until nearly two thousand years later, those verses explain what the Lord was doing in the life of Joseph to prepare him to save many people alive. Those verses say, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” Joseph came to understand that God worked all

things for good.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand and illustrate these things from the life of Joseph. The Lord is the One who is working in their lives to conform them to the image of Christ. They can experience the joy of the Lord as the Lord works through the difficult things that happen in their lives to prepare them for the ministry the Lord has for them as they serve Him. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to explain this lesson to others.