

The Life of Joseph

Week 4 - The Great Disappointment

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WHAT WE BELIEVE

1. Read Genesis 41:1-46. Why did Pharaoh call Joseph from prison after he'd been there for about 12 years (two years since the end of chapter 40 plus ten years prior)?
2. Who urged Pharaoh to call upon Joseph to interpret his dreams? How did he know Joseph?
3. What did Joseph ask Pharaoh's cupbearer to do in chapter 40? Did the cupbearer do what Joseph requested?
4. What did Pharaoh dream? How did Joseph interpret the dreams? What solution did Joseph propose to Pharaoh?

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CATECHISM CORNER

Heidelberg Catechism

Lord's Day 9

Q&A 26

Q. What do you believe when you say, "I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth"?

A. That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who out of nothing created heaven and earth and everything in them, (1) who still upholds and rules them by his eternal counsel and providence, (2) is my God and Father because of Christ the Son. (3) I trust God so much that I do not doubt he will provide whatever I need for body and soul, (4) and will turn to my good whatever adversity he sends upon me in this sad world. (5) God is able to do this because he is almighty God (6) and desires to do this because he is a faithful Father. (7)

1 Gen. 1-2; Ex. 20:11; Ps. 33:6; Isa. 44:24; Acts 4:24; 14:15

2 Ps. 104; Matt. 6:30; 10:29; Eph. 1:11

3 John 1:12-13; Rom. 8:15-16; Gal. 4:4-7; Eph. 1:5

4 Ps. 55:22; Matt. 6:25-26; Luke 12:22-31

5 Rom. 8:28

6 Gen. 18:14; Rom. 8:31-39 7 Matt. 7:9-11

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GOD SPEAKS TO US

1. Joseph gave God credit for his ability to interpret dreams (see verse 16). What has God revealed to you through your study of scripture, worship, and fellowship with other believers?

2. Egypt would face seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. When has the Lord given you plenty in life? When have you experienced famine? How did God provide for you through the lean years?

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GOD SPEAKS TO OUR FAMILY

1. Pharaoh appointed Joseph to his new role because of Joseph's dream interpretation skills. Joseph's brothers hated him because God revealed an unpleasant truth to them through Joseph's dreams. Has your family encouraged you to use your gifts? How can you encourage others in your family to use their gifts?

2. Pharaoh gave Joseph signs of authority - a signet ring, fine linen garments, and a gold chain around his neck. How can parents impress upon their children that they are the authority in the household? What can parents do to make their children want to follow their lead?

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NOTES ON GENESIS

"The most trivial and the most important, the most likely and the most unlikely circumstances are made to minister to the development of God's purposes. In chapter 39 Satan uses Potiphar's wife, and in chapter 40 he uses Pharaoh's chief butler. The former he used to put Joseph into the dungeon; and the latter he used to keep him there, through his ungrateful negligence; but all in vain. God was behind the scenes. His finger was guiding all the springs of the vast machine of circumstances, and when the due time was come, he brought forth the man of His purpose, and set his feet in a large room. Now, this is ever God's prerogative. He is above all, and can use all for the accomplishment of His grand and unsearchable designs. It is sweet to be able thus to trace our Father's hand and counsel in everything. Sweet to know that all sorts of agents are at His sovereign disposal; angels, men and devils-all are under His omnipotent hand, and all are made to carry out His purposes."

Notes on the Book of Genesis (1880) by Charles Henry Mackintosh

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DREAMER OF DREAMS

"The OT understanding of dreams had several significant features. Like the rest of the ancient world, people of God believed that God communicated in dreams. Yet there is in the OT accounts a reserve lacking in the perverse and obscene scenes often described in pagan dream records. Another distinction is that God is the initiator; he gives the revelatory dreams when, where, and to whom he pleases-a truth painfully learned by Saul (1 Sm 28:6, 15). More

significantly, the secular approach to interpretation was specifically rejected. Understanding of dream symbols came not by research in dream books or by natural human ability. When Joseph interpreted the dreams of his two Egyptian fellow prisoners and later of the pharaoh himself, he insisted on giving full credit to God (Gn 40:8; 41:7, 25, 28, 39). Similarly Daniel informed Nebuchadnezzar that the "God in heaven that revealeth secrets" would make known the king's dream and its meaning, in which task professional dream interpreters had failed (Dn 2:27, 28).

Unlike their neighbors, the OT saints knew that a dream was a mere "vision of the night" (Jb 33:15), and figuratively represented unreality (Jb 20:8; Pss 73:20; 126:1; Is 29:7, 8)."

Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). Dreams. In Baker encyclopedia of the Bible (Vol. 1, p. 642). Baker Book House.

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GOD SPEAKS IN WORSHIP

1. How does Joseph's long wait challenge or encourage your worship during seasons when God seems silent or when answers to prayer feel delayed?
2. Pharaoh acknowledged that "the Spirit of God" was clearly in Joseph (Genesis 41:38), leading to Joseph's dramatic promotion and new authority. How do we acknowledge God's presence during worship?

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THE GOSPEL CALL

1. Joseph gave Pharaoh both bad news and good news. What is the "bad news" when we proclaim the gospel? What is the "good news"?
2. Joseph was quick to give God the glory for his ability to interpret dreams. How can you follow Joseph's example and quickly point others to God rather than building up your own image? What practical phrases or habits can help you turn everyday conversations into opportunities to introduce the God who gives wisdom and answers?