

JOSEPH IN PRISON

Genesis 40:1-23

I. INTRODUCTION-

- a. When last we left Joseph... he had been falsely accused by Potiphar's wife... and thrown into prison.
- b. Joseph was 17 when his brothers sold him into slavery... he had been in Egypt for about 11 years... when he was thrown into prison.
- c. So Joseph was about 27 or 28 years old... when he went to prison.

II. JOSEPH IN PRISON-

- a. The prison Joseph was put in was not a common prison...it seems to have been a prison where "royal" prisoners were sent.
- b. This was a prison where those who had some kind of connection to the royal court of Pharaoh... were sent.
- c. This is another indication that Potiphar... did not believe his wife's accusation against Joseph.
- d. Instead of having Joseph executed... or instead of having Joseph confined to a prison for common criminals.
- e. Potiphar made sure that Joseph went to a prison... that would have less harsh conditions.
- f. Pharaoh's chief butler and chief baker... important positions in Pharaoh's household and court... had been confined to this prison.
- g. The Bible says that these court officers had been put in prison because Pharaoh was angry with them... we are not told what they had done... but they had done something to anger Pharaoh.

- h. Pharaoh's chief butler... or chief cupbearer... was expected to taste all of his food and drinks to ensure that nothing had not been poisoned ... the chief baker oversaw the cooking of Pharaoh's food.
- i. Men who held these positions were expected to be trustworthy... and beyond the influence of the Pharaoh's enemies.
- j. Apparently, Pharaoh suspected one or both of these men of being guilty of some kind of wrongdoing ... he may have suspected them of being involved in a plot against his life.
- k. While the matter was under investigation... Pharaoh had the chief butler and chief baker put in prison.
- l. And Joseph... was put in charge of taking care of these important prisoners.

III. THE DREAMS OF THE PRISONERS-

- a. One morning... as Joseph came to attend to these men... he noticed that they were more troubled than usual.
- b. When Joseph asked them why... he learned that the night before each of them had had similar dreams ... they believed these dreams meant something ... but they did not know what.
- c. In ancient times... many people believed that the gods communicated with them in dreams.
- d. Dreams play a large part in Joseph's story... remember that Joseph had two dreams which he interpreted to mean that one day his brothers and father would bow down before him.
- e. It was probably not wise for Joseph to share those dreams with his brothers... but he did... which helped fuel the fire of their hatred against him.

- f. Joseph's interpretation of the dreams of the chief butler and cupbearer ...would play an important part in Joseph's story.
- g. And the whole story of Joseph turns on Pharaoh's dream... and Joseph's interpretation of it.
- h. Does God still speak through dreams and visions today?... God certainly can.
- i. Today there are stories of Muslims... and others in the world where the Bible is not available and accessible... having dreams which lead them to come to Christ.
- j. But for us who live in America... where the Bible is readily available and accessible... where the gospel is freely preached... where there are churches on every corner...there is no need for God to speak to any of us in a dream.
- k. Why would God speak to us in a dream... when He is daily speaking to us loud and clear in His Word?
- l. There is nothing God needs to tell you in a dream... that He has not already told you in His Word.
- m. *Hebrews 1:1-2 (NLT) "Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son."*
- n. It is in the Bible...that God has spoken to us through His Son.
- o. The Bible is God's final, complete, fixed and closed Word... everything you need to know about God... about His truth ... and about His will for your life... is found in His Word.
- p. *2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV) "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God (men and women of God) may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

- q. No believer should ever base any decision, action or belief... on a dream or a vision... whether it is our dream or someone else's.
- r. Our decisions, actions and beliefs... should ***only*** be based on and guided by the Word of God.
- s. It is true that the Holy Spirit speaks to believers...and He guides us.
- t. But how does the Holy Spirit speak to us?... He speaks to us through God's Word... and He will always guide us to obey God's Word.
- u. What about those claims by some people... that they have gone to Heaven and back in visions, dreams or after death experiences?
- v. Two things... #1, Such claims are unnecessary... we don't need a five year...or a fifty year old...or anyone else to tell us that Heaven is real ...we know that Heaven is real because the Word of God says it is.
- w. #2, Such claims are always unreliable... no matter how remarkable and amazing these claims may seem...in all of these claims and accounts ... there are always things that are unbiblical... and contrary to the Word of God.
- x. Personally...I don't pay any attention to these claims and accounts...I stick with the Bible.

IV. JOSEPH INTERPRETS THE DREAMS-

- a. In the day of Joseph... there was no Bible... so God spoke to Joseph in dreams... and when needed... God gave Joseph the ability to interpret the dreams of others.
- b. Joseph asked the men to tell him their dreams... the chief butler's dream is recorded in verses 9-13.
- c. *Genesis 40:9-11 (NLT) "So the chief cup-bearer told Joseph his dream first. "In my dream," he said, "I saw a grapevine in front of me. The vine had three branches that began to bud and blossom, and*

soon it produced clusters of ripe grapes. I was holding Pharaoh's wine cup in my hand, so I took a cluster of grapes and squeezed the juice into the cup. Then I placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand."

- d. Here is Joseph's interpretation of the chief butler's dream... *Genesis 40:12-13 (NLT) "This is what the dream means," Joseph said. "The three branches represent three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift you up and restore you to your position as his chief cup-bearer."*
- e. Hearing the chief butler's good news... the chief baker told Joseph his dream... in verses 16-19.
- f. *Genesis 40:16-17 (NLT) "When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given the first dream such a positive interpretation, he said to Joseph, "I had a dream, too. In my dream there were three baskets of white pastries stacked on my head. The top basket contained all kinds of pastries for Pharaoh, but the birds came and ate them from the basket on my head."*
- g. Probably only after being prodded by the chief baker... Joseph reluctantly gave his interpretation of his dream.
- h. *Genesis 40:18-19 (NLT) "This is what the dream means," Joseph told him. "The three baskets also represent three days. Three days from now Pharaoh will lift you up and impale your body on a pole. Then birds will come and peck away at your flesh."*
- i. Three days later... on Pharaoh's birthday, ...a decision was made in the case of the chief butler and chief baker.
- j. As Joseph predicted...the chief butler was returned to duty... and the chief baker was executed.
- k. Something else happened more important to Joseph... when the chief butler was released.

- l. Joseph asked the chief butler to remember him...and intercede with Pharaoh to have him released...when the chief butler was restored to his position.
- m. But once the chief butler was released and restored... he forgot about Joseph...which resulted in Joseph staying in prison for two more years.
- n. So... for Joseph his adversity continued... at 17 he had been thrown in a pit by his brothers ... then he was sold into slavery... for 10 years Joseph was a household slave... and then he was falsely accused of a crime he had not committed... he was thrown into prison... where he stayed for at least 2 years... forgotten by a man who could have helped him.
- o. What was God doing?... God was using adversity...to mature Joseph ... to teach Joseph... and to prepare Joseph... for a very important task.
- p. There are some things about ourselves... and about God... that we cannot learn on the mountaintop... there are some things we can only learn in the valley... and in the fire of adversity.
- q. How God used adversity in Joseph's life... helps us to understand how God uses adversity to work in our life.

V. THE BLESSING OF ADVERSITY-

- a. #1, God may use adversity... to provide us with the opportunity to serve Him in a great way.
- b. When the Apostle Paul was a prisoner in Rome... he thanked God for his chains... because being a prisoner gave Paul the opportunity to preach the gospel to the highest of Roman officials... perhaps even Caesar himself ... an opportunity Paul would have never had without his chains.

- c. Joseph never would have never come in contact with Pharaoh... if he had not been in prison with the chief baker... God used adversity to prepare Joseph to serve Him in a great way.
- d. God may use adversity... to give us the opportunity to serve Him in a significant way.
- e. #2, God uses adversity to help us to grow and mature as Christians...
God will use suffering to make us stronger.
- f. When Joseph arrived in Egypt he was a believer... but he had a lot of growing up to do if he was going to assume the leadership of Egypt... in a most critical time.
- g. God used adversity to strengthen Joseph... to test him... to toughen him up... to help him grow in wisdom...faith... and compassion.
- h. If God is going to use you... He is going to use adversity to do things in your life that need to be done.
- i. God used a time of adversity in my life to teach how to pray... and to teach me how important prayer is.
- j. #3, God uses adversity to test and reveal...the reality and the progress of our faith.
- k. In school... tests are given to test and reveal what we have learned... and what we have not learned.
- l. In life... God uses adversity to test and reveal where we are in our faith and in our walk with God.
- m. God does not give us the tests of adversity for His benefit... but for our own.
- n. Adversity reveals the reality and the authenticity of our faith... and God uses adversity to reveal where we are weak and where we are strong in our faith.

- o. #4, God uses adversity to humble us... and to remind us how dependent we are on Him.
- p. Any time a believer gets self-dependent and too big for their britches ... God will bring adversity to their life... to humble them down and to teach them... how dependent they are on Him.
- q. *Psalm 119:67 (NKJV) "Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word."*
- r. Problems and adversity in our life... will remind us and teach how dependent we are on the Lord.
- s. #5, God uses adversity... to prepare our hearts to minister to others.
- t. How can we reach out and minister to others who are hurting... if we have never experienced God's grace and mercy in our own times of suffering?
- u. How can we say to others... "I know how you feel"... if we have never felt the same kind of pain that others are feeling?
- v. God uses adversity... to prepare our hearts to minister to others.

VI. CONCLUSION-

- a. We don't have to pray for adversity... adversity will come ... and when it does... we need to trust God... look for the hand of God ... and the heart of God... and ask God to help us learn the lessons we need to learn.
- b. Adversity may come to our life... but God will never abandon us.