

Genesis 41 – Faithful When Things Are Great

- I. God Prepares The Stage For Joseph’s Ascension (1-13)
 - a. Pharaoh Has Two Dreams (1-7)
 - i. Two full years have passed in which Joseph is wrongfully imprisoned
 1. Joseph has been forgotten by the cup-bearer he helped
 2. Joseph has been forgotten “until now” by God’s plan
 - ii. 7 gaunt cows eat 7 healthy cows (1-4)
 - iii. 7 thin ears of corn eat 7 plump ears (5-7)
 1. Both dreams have similar circumstances
 - b. Pharaoh’s Dreams Can’t Be Understood (8)
 - i. Pharaoh’s spirit is troubled
 1. The dreams were disturbing to say the least
 2. Portent of something bad in Egypt – Nile was source of their life – source of economic stability
 - ii. Pharaoh calls for magicians and wise men
 1. Trained in dream interpretation – Egyptian guidebooks found
 - iii. No one could interpret his dream
 1. Unable to interpret them
 2. Sure that some tried – ultimately unable to convince Pharaoh
 3. God has planned this to place Joseph where he wants
 - c. Pharaoh is Told of Joseph’s Ability (9-13)
 - i. Cup-bearer reminds Pharaoh of his time in jail (9-10)
 1. “I remember my offenses” – could mean – I remember when I was in jail OR it could mean that he remembers the wrong he did by not helping Joseph
 2. Reminds Pharaoh about when he threw him and the baker in jail
 - ii. Both officials had dreams(11)
 - iii. A Hebrew there interpreted their dreams (12)
 - iv. His interpretation came true (13)
 1. Focuses on Joseph’s ability and the accuracy of his interpretation
- II. God Provides What Joseph Needs To Fulfill His Purpose (14-36)
 - a. Pharaoh’s Introduction To Joseph (14-15)
 - i. Joseph shaved and brought before Pharaoh (14)
 1. Joseph is Egyptianized –
 2. Shaved (face and head) because this was the Egyptian custom – Hebrews grew the hair out, only shaving it off when mourning or repenting.
 3. Now this Hebrew prisoner stood before the ruler of all Egypt
 - a. God was with him here just as in the pit and Potiphar’s house
 - b. God had orchestrated all this – He would not leave Joseph now
 - ii. Joseph is told of Pharaoh’s dreams (15)
 1. Pharaoh tells Joseph he has heard he can interpret dreams
 - b. Joseph Honors God before Pharaoh (16)
 - i. Joseph denies any special ability to interpret dreams
 1. Joseph is humble – “not me” – “it is not in me”
 2. Joseph doesn’t seek to negotiate for better circumstances

3. Joseph's goal is to glorify God
- ii. Joseph tells Pharaoh that God is the sole source of dreams and interpretations
 1. To Pharaoh's face, Joseph asserts that God is superior to Pharaoh and all Egypt's gods.
- iii. God will give Pharaoh (shalom) answer – not that God will give you what you want – but will give you the right answer pacifying your disturbed spirit
- c. Pharaoh tells Joseph his dreams (17-24)
- d. God reveals The Interpretation To Joseph (25-32)
 - i. God has revealed His plan to Pharaoh (25)
 1. Both dreams have the same meaning
 2. God is making His will and plan known to Pharaoh
 3. Joseph continually exalts God before Pharaoh
 - ii. 7 good years and 7 years of famine (26-27)
 1. Joseph is not afraid to speak the truth to Pharaoh
 2. Many prophets and messengers have been killed because a ruler didn't like their message
 - a. Maybe this is why the magicians didn't want to give Pharaoh an interpretation?
 - iii. This is Gods decree for Egypt (28-31)
 1. Joseph continually puts God before Pharaoh's mind
 2. God is bringing this to pass
 - a. The future of Egypt don't depend on the great Pharaoh or any of the gods of Egypt or the Nile
 3. Joseph presents God alone as being sovereign and in control of Egypt – not Pharaoh – not the gods of Egypt
 - iv. The interpretation is certain (32)
 1. There is nothing Pharaoh can do about it
 2. This is certain because the true God wills it
 - a. What will happen is entirely up to the one true God and nothing can be done about His will
 - b. We must remember this in these uncertain days—when evil regimes thumb their noses at justice, and millions cheer them on—when dark kings prevail with seeming impunity, and righteous people are engulfed by the night. Remember that these kings do not make history, but rather God uses them to effect his purposes. – Kent Hughes
 - c.
 - v. Joseph is a prophet and a preacher – he tells what will be and then gives Pharaoh counsel about what to do to prepare
- e. God Counsels Pharaoh Through Joseph (33-36)
 - i. Knowledge of what God is going to do does not produce passive resignation but aggressive action.
 - ii. Select a wise man and overseers over Egypt (33-34a)
 - iii. Store grain during years of plenty (34b-35)
 1. That food will be available during famine (36)
 - iv. Joseph's counsel shows a wisdom and ingenuity but also shows that God has prepared Joseph all along for this moment
 1. Joseph has been put in charge everywhere God has sent him

2. He has learned what it means to organize, prepare, and lead
- III. God's Will Is Fulfilled Through Joseph (37-57)
- a. God places Joseph over all Egypt (37-44)
 - i. Pharaoh recognizes God's spirit on Joseph (37-38)
 1. He has already called all his wise men and none could help him
 2. Even the Pharaoh recognizes God's hand upon Joseph – just like everyone else in Joseph's story
 3. God has been with Joseph every step of the way and it has been noticeable
 - ii. Joseph is Egyptianized and Given Authority (39-45)
 1. Pharaoh sets Joseph over Egypt (39-41)
 - a. This morning Joseph woke up a prisoner and this afternoon he is head of Egypt
 - b. This has all come about because of God's timing and God's plan
 2. Pharaoh clothes Joseph according to his station (42)
 - a. Joseph is given Pharaoh's signet ring off his hand
 - i. This was the ring which held Pharaoh's insignia
 - ii. Joseph is a seal bearer of Pharaoh
 - iii. Gave Joseph authority to speak for Pharaoh
 - b. Joseph is given garments of fine linen (Egyptian loan word)
 - i. His brothers ripped from him the garment that designated his father's special love
 - ii. Now he is given garment that designates his station before the whole world
 - c. Joseph is given a gold chain around his neck
 3. Pharaoh honors Joseph through the city (43)
 - a. He places Joseph in a royal chariot and parades him through the land of Egypt
 - b. Callers went before them shouting that all must bow (make way) before Joseph.
 4. Pharaoh specifies Joseph's authority (44)
 - a. Pharaoh makes sure everyone knows the extent of Joseph's authority.
 - b. Without his consent – no one shall do anything in all the land
 - c. Joseph has now risen to the height of worldly power
 5. Joseph is given a new name and a wife (45)
 - a. Joseph is named Zaphenath-paneah which means "God speaks and lives" or "God has said he will live"
 - b. Joseph is given an Egyptian wife – Asenath – Daughter of a priest of On
 - i. Asenath means "belonging to Neith" (Egyptian goddess)
 - ii. On is a city – Greeks called Heliopolis (sun city) – situated on the Nile in lower Egypt just N.E. of Cairo
 - iii. On is religious center of worship of Ra the sun god.

Joseph's soul was in greater peril than at any other time in his short life. It is one thing to remain believing and God-centered and faithful in the pit; it is quite another to be faithful at the pinnacle. The pit instilled dependence upon God. Days, months, and years in the pit graced Joseph's soul with an ever-deepening sense of need and dependence upon God.

There was only one way to look while in the pit, and that was up—to God. On the other hand, the pinnacle of Egyptian life inclined the soul toward pride and independence. At the top, looking up to God was not so natural.

- b. God prospers Joseph during years of abundance (46-52)
 - i. Joseph Fulfills his new responsibilities (46-48)
 - 1. Joseph assesses the land at 30 years old
 - a. Joseph dies at 110 years old in Genesis 50:26 – he is buried in Egypt – which means that Joseph ruled Egypt under the Pharaohs for eighty years.
 - 2. Joseph collects provisions during the first 7 years (47-49)
 - a. Joseph is fulfilling his role to the best of his ability
 - b. Just like he did in Potipher’s house – and in the prison
 - c. Joseph believes God has placed him here for the salvation of Egypt
 - d. Joseph is being faithful to his calling wherever he is placed
 - ii. Joseph is Given Two Sons (50-52)
 - 1. Manasseh (one who causes to forget)
 - a. His sorrow in the events that led him to Egypt
 - b. The source of that sorrow which is his father’s house - specifically his brothers
 - c. Name focuses on a God who preserves
 - 2. Ephraim (to bear fruit)
 - a. God has provided and blessed me in the land of affliction
 - 3. Both boy’s names are Hebrew names, not Egyptian
 - a. Joseph is still faithful to his God
 - b. Even in the land of plenty when everything is going right and comfortable – Joseph is faithful to His God
- c. Joseph is Faithful During years of Famine (53-57)
 - i. The Famine begins (53-54)
 - ii. Joseph takes charge of food distribution (55)
 - iii. Joseph sold grain to all those in need (56-57)
 - 1. : “In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (12:3).
 - iv. Joseph again serves where God has placed him to the best of his ability

Christians, this is the age of affluence. And it is possible for a middle-class person to live with greater ease and independence than did Pharaoh in Egypt—insulated from the economy, insulated from the vicissitudes of nature, insulated from illness—so that he or she never looks up to God for anything.

- Kent Hughes