

Genesis (2011) 41B

- After a brief break, we're back to studying the story of Joseph's rise
 - He is now at the lowest point of his life
 - Joseph is languishing in Egypt having spent 13 years in slavery and now prison
 - But two years ago, he encountered a man who God will use to change Joseph's life
 - That man was the cupbearer, whom Joseph helped by interpreting his dream
 - As we learned in that prior week, Joseph has been gifted by God to interpret dreams, which is a rare gift in scripture
 - And Joseph has used the gift whenever the Lord gives opportunity
 - And the Lord is about to give Joseph another opportunity, in keeping with His purposes
 - The Lord has given the Pharaoh a dream that the black arts cannot discern
 - Of course, God is at work here to bring Joseph and Pharaoh together
 - He has gifted Joseph with a spiritual ability to serve God through interpretation of dreams
 - And the Lord has brought a need into Pharaoh's life that only Joseph's divine ability can satisfy
 - What a simple and beautiful picture of how the Lord works through spiritual gifts
 - In a sense, they are divine solutions to divine problems
 - God places spiritual gifts in the body of Christ specifically to address spiritual needs
 - These gifts serve to build up believers and strengthen them for further ministry

- And at other times they serve to direct an unbeliever in the plan of God
 - Whether that connection is intended to bring saving faith
 - Or other times it merely directs the unbeliever's steps in accordance with God's plans
 - That's what we see happening with Pharaoh here
- So having received the dream, Pharaoh now seeks for an interpretation
 - And this gives opportunity for that cupbearer to step forward with a God-inspired solution

Gen. 41:8 Now in the morning his spirit was troubled, so he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

Gen. 41:9 Then the chief cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh, saying, "I would make mention today of my own offenses.

Gen. 41:10 "Pharaoh was furious with his servants, and he put me in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, both me and the chief baker.

Gen. 41:11 "We had a dream on the same night, he and I; each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his own dream.

Gen. 41:12 "Now a Hebrew youth was with us there, a servant of the captain of the bodyguard, and we related them to him, and he interpreted our dreams for us. To each one he interpreted according to his own dream.

Gen. 41:13 "And just as he interpreted for us, so it happened; he restored me in my office, but he hanged him."

- Pharaoh appeals to his wise men, which would have included diviners and magicians, but none could give the interpretation
 - These wise men relied on the black arts to obtain their spiritual insight
 - Diviners seek to predict the future, while magicians seek to control the future
 - And the enemy has power to a degree to give these powers to men who seek them from him
 - But his power is limited to insight and power related to Satan's own plans and works
 - The enemy can only share with men his own plans and activity

- And to the extent the Lord permits the enemy to act according to his desires, then Satan can empower men to “predict” the future, so to speak
- But that power cannot extend to predicting God’s plans
 - Because Satan can’t know what God will do
 - So that’s where Pharaoh’s men come up short
- It’s been two years since the cupbearer met Joseph, but only now he remembers Joseph’s ability to interpret dreams
 - That makes sense, since once the cupbearer had been restored, the last thing he would have wanted to do was remind Pharaoh of his past displeasure
 - In fact, notice that the cupbearer begins his testimony by making an apology for bringing up that unpleasant episode
 - So this was the first logical opportunity for the cupbearer to make mention of Joseph, since it was spoken in an effort to help Pharaoh
 - The more important question we should consider is why the Lord waited two years to bring this dream to Pharaoh
 - The Lord could have initiated this next phase of His plan at any point after the cupbearer left the prison
 - Joseph’s additional two years in the prison was made necessary entirely because the Lord waited that long to bring the dream to Pharaoh
 - How do we explain Joseph’s additional waiting in prison?
 - Glance ahead to v.46 in this chapter

[Gen. 41:46](#) Now Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt.

- God’s plan was for Joseph to wait until he had reached the age of thirty before he could stand before Pharaoh and begin to rule
- This age is another picture connecting Joseph and Jesus

- Jesus was thirty years of age when He began his public ministry
- And this was also the age in the Law when a priest of God was to begin serving in the tabernacle
- So Joseph is elevated into a place of ruling at this same age
 - From this position he will rule over not only Egypt but also Israel
 - In other words, Joseph will become a ruler for both Jew and Gentile, the picture of Christ
- It's lessons like this that help us maintain perspective in the experiences of our lives
 - Have you been required to wait for something to change in your life?
 - You wanted release from a burden
 - You wanted relief from an illness or a trial
 - You asked God to solve a problem, bring a blessing, intervene in some way
 - But the answer didn't come, at least not at first, and perhaps never in our understanding
 - How do we relate to these disappointments?
 - Joseph's story teaches that men can't see enough of God's work nor fully understand God's purposes apart from what He reveals to us
 - So we don't have enough data to make conclusions
 - Like Joseph suffering in prison, we wait and wait wondering where God has gone
 - So where do we turn when our knowledge and understanding fails? When our data is incomplete and our insight is lacking?
 - We stop focusing on the data, on our experiences and emotions and ignorance
 - We turn to God's word and we rest in what He says

- We know He says He never leaves us nor forsakes us
- We know that it testifies that even if the Lord takes our life, there is glory to be found in it

[Gen. 41:14](#) Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph, and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon; and when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came to Pharaoh.

[Gen. 41:15](#) Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it."

[Gen. 41:16](#) Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer."

[Gen. 41:17](#) So Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, "In my dream, behold, I was standing on the bank of the Nile;

[Gen. 41:18](#) and behold, seven cows, fat and sleek came up out of the Nile, and they grazed in the marsh grass.

[Gen. 41:19](#) "Lo, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such as I had never seen for ugliness in all the land of Egypt;

[Gen. 41:20](#) and the lean and ugly cows ate up the first seven fat cows.

[Gen. 41:21](#) "Yet when they had devoured them, it could not be detected that they had devoured them, for they were just as ugly as before. Then I awoke.

[Gen. 41:22](#) "I saw also in my dream, and behold, seven ears, full and good, came up on a single stalk;

[Gen. 41:23](#) and lo, seven ears, withered, thin, and scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them;

[Gen. 41:24](#) and the thin ears swallowed the seven good ears. Then I told it to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me."

- So the Pharaoh, having heard about Joseph's amazing abilities, calls for Joseph to be brought before him
 - The ancient historian Herodotus reports that the Egyptians were renown for cleanliness
 - They associated body hair with uncleanness
 - So men would shave all body hair
 - Accordingly, we can be sure that Joseph didn't appear before Pharaoh with any body hair showing
 - And the Egyptians probably didn't have the Schick super smooth close razors of today

- To make matters worse, the scripture says they hurriedly brought him before Pharaoh, since the king was impatient to receive an answer
 - No doubt the process would have been uncomfortable for Joseph, to say the least
 - They dressed him in fitting apparel and put him before Pharaoh
- As Joseph appears before Pharaoh, the king reveals he wants Joseph to interpret a dream
 - Even before Joseph hears the dream unfold, he declares that he is not the one interpreting but it will be God doing the work
 - Another shining moment for Joseph
 - We can't overstate how awesome it would have been to appear before Pharaoh in that moment
 - Joseph was standing before the most important man on the entire earth
 - The aroma of power and opulence would have been overwhelming, especially to a man plucked up from prison
 - And the king is turning to him for answers
 - Joseph knows he can interpret dreams, so he answers the king in confidence
 - But his response makes no attempt to claim any credit for himself
 - His modesty is simply honesty, as we know, but it's still a remarkable show of humility and strength
 - He could have laid claim to the glory for himself assuming it would lead to something good for Joseph
 - But instead, Joseph gives all credit to the Lord
 - Let's all emulate this example
 - In the way the Lord gifts us, we seek to serve Him
 - But as we serve, let's never allow the results to be credited to us

- Let's tell people at every opportunity that our service and any good results it obtains are the direct result of the Lord at work through us
- Like Joseph, we are vessels but God is the supply
- Then Joseph hears Pharaoh's dream again
 - Of the seven fat cows and the seven lean cows
 - Of the good ears and the scorched ears of grain
- There are a couple of new pieces of information not previous revealed to us
 - The thin cows were the worst Pharaoh had ever seen
 - And the thin ears of grain consumed the fat but still looked gaunt even after the consumption
- So then Joseph offers the interpretation

[Gen. 41:25](#) Now Joseph said to Pharaoh, "Pharaoh's dreams are one and the same; God has told to Pharaoh what He is about to do.

[Gen. 41:26](#) "The seven good cows are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one and the same.

[Gen. 41:27](#) "The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven thin ears scorched by the east wind will be seven years of famine.

[Gen. 41:28](#) "It is as I have spoken to Pharaoh: God has shown to Pharaoh what He is about to do.

[Gen. 41:29](#) "Behold, seven years of great abundance are coming in all the land of Egypt;

[Gen. 41:30](#) and after them seven years of famine will come, and all the abundance will be forgotten in the land of Egypt, and the famine will ravage the land.

[Gen. 41:31](#) "So the abundance will be unknown in the land because of that subsequent famine; for it will be very severe.

[Gen. 41:32](#) "Now as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, it means that the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about.

[Gen. 41:33](#) "Now let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

[Gen. 41:34](#) "Let Pharaoh take action to appoint overseers in charge of the land, and let him exact a fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven years of abundance.

[Gen. 41:35](#) "Then let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and store up the grain for food in the cities under Pharaoh's authority, and let them guard it.

[Gen. 41:36](#) "Let the food become as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land will not perish during the famine."

- Joseph begins the interpretation by announcing that the two dreams are speaking about the same thing, so he need only provide a single interpretation
 - These dreams were given to Pharaoh because the Lord wants to reveal to him what is coming to Egypt
 - There will be seven years of severe famine in the land of Egypt
 - But before that time, there will be seven years of abundance
 - In fact, the Lord gave the dream in a repetition to Pharaoh to ensure that he knew it was from God and it would be coming quickly
 - And knowing the famine is coming, Joseph says the Pharaoh must use the seven years of plenty to prepare
 - The abundance must be a time of storing for the future need
 - But this famine will be so severe that it will consume the entire storage of the years of plenty
 - So Joseph tells Pharaoh that it will be important that someone manage this storage process carefully
 - The abundance must be husbanded with great care if the nation is going to survive the famine
 - I find Joseph's story helpful to remember when making decisions about our own personal resources and the way we make plans for the future
 - Scripture teaches that the Lord will also make a provision for His children, as Jesus taught in the sermon on the mount
 - But God's willingness to provide doesn't eliminate our responsibility to take opportunity in times of plenty to store up
 - God's provision for a future lean year may have been provided to us in an earlier year of plenty
- Joseph gives Pharaoh a specific plan of action that would take advantage of God's advanced warning
 - He tells Pharaoh now is the time to act
 - Appoint a leader and empower that person with the authority to tax, and store up and protect the abundance

- Then once the hard times come, the nation will have a reserve it can draw upon
- Notice that these suggestions do not follow automatically from the dream
 - The dream said nothing about how to respond to the coming situation
 - Nevertheless, Joseph knew what to do because he was drawing upon a second spiritual gift God had given him
 - Joseph has always demonstrated two gifts working in unison
 - He has the ability to interpret dreams and thereby demonstrate great insight and wisdom
 - And he has always demonstrated an ability to lead others and thereby become their ruler
 - And he's putting both of these gifts together in his appearance before Pharaoh
- And these two qualities provide yet another picture of Christ in the story of Joseph
 - In His first coming, Jesus demonstrates the power of God in His teaching and wisdom
 - Jesus speaks of spiritual truths and gives knowledge concerning the future
 - He acts as a prophet speaking truth
 - But in His second coming, the Lord will demonstrate His authority and power to rule over the earth
 - The reemergence of Joseph's ability to lead is the clue we need to recognize that the story is turning toward pictures of Jesus' Second Coming
 - Just as Jesus' reign at the right hand of the Father begins after Jesus is resurrected from the grave
 - Now Joseph's rise from prison leads him to be elevated to second in charge under Pharaoh

[Gen. 41:37](#) Now the proposal seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his servants.

[Gen. 41:38](#) Then Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find a man like this, in whom is a divine spirit?”

[Gen. 41:39](#) So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are.

[Gen. 41:40](#) “You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you.”

[Gen. 41:41](#) Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.”

[Gen. 41:42](#) Then Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put the gold necklace around his neck.

[Gen. 41:43](#) He had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, “Bow the knee!” And he set him over all the land of Egypt.

[Gen. 41:44](#) Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Though I am Pharaoh, yet without your permission no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.”

[Gen. 41:45](#) Then Pharaoh named Joseph Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him Asenath, the daughter of Potiphra priest of On, as his wife. And Joseph went forth over the land of Egypt.

[Gen. 41:46](#) Now Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt.

- Pharaoh shows his own wisdom as he immediately decides that Joseph spoke truth
 - Moreover, Pharaoh decides that Joseph is the man for the job
 - He declares that no one could be as well suited for the role he himself defined
 - He says Joseph has a divine spirit, which was a pagan point of view
 - But it pictures the way Jesus had the Spirit come upon Him at the time He came into public ministry
 - And Pharaoh places Joseph at his right hand, second only to the Pharaoh
 - Here again, a picture of Christ seated at the right hand of the Father
 - Ruling all creation under the authority of the Father
 - Why would the Pharaoh suddenly have so much confidence in Joseph?

- It goes back to the issue of the Hyksos ruling over a Hamite people
- The Pharaoh was a Hyksos, a semite people foreign to the Egyptian Hamite culture
- But Joseph is a semite like the Pharaoh, so he naturally feels more trusting of someone like Joseph than any Hamite
- Here again is another piece of evidence of how the Lord has laid all the necessary ground work to bring Joseph the success God wanted in the day
 - In the thirteen years Joseph spent in Egypt, he would have learned the language, how to write the Egyptian hieroglyphics
 - He would have learned the culture, the government (from Potiphar), and the customs
 - He also would have been very familiar with Pharaoh's elite guard and court officials
 - Without these skills, he never could have succeeded in his new role
 - Thirteen years may have felt like God delaying, but it was actually God preparing
- Never lose hope in God's power to accomplish great things through your patience and obedience
 - Instead, take hope in understanding that the Lord has been at work making preparations for you to serve Him in some way even before you were born
 - The details will come together in His timing
 - Just stay the course, remain obedient and faithful
- Let's finish this morning by looking at all that Pharaoh did in elevating Joseph
 - We already mentioned that Joseph was elevated to the right hand of the king
 - He is given the role of vizier, which means prime minister
 - And in that position of power, Joseph will represent the Pharaoh to the nation and the world

- Joseph receives Pharaoh's ring, which allowed Joseph to issue decrees sealed with the Pharaoh's seal
- Then he receives a robe typical of the kind of garment traditionally worn by men in Joseph's position
- Third, he receives a gold chain and royal chariot in which to take a victory lap around the nation
 - The Hyksos introduced chariots into Egypt, and it was the most advanced weapon of combat in its day
- And everywhere Joseph would go, every knee in Egypt will bow
- And even though Pharaoh is the reigning authority, nothing in the land can be done apart from Joseph's word
- Then, Joseph's name is changed to an Egyptian word meaning "God has spoken and he shall live"
 - The sense is that the word of Joseph brings life
- Finally, Joseph is given an Egyptian wife
 - By marrying an Egyptian Joseph effectively becomes a naturalized citizen in Egypt, which was the purpose in this gesture
 - The girl was daughter of a prominent priest
 - Joseph's marrying of a Gentile wasn't a problem, as God had obviously brought about these circumstances
 - This was different than marrying the Canaanites, a people to be destroyed
- In these last details are one more picture of Christ
 - Like Joseph, Christ has earned His right to rule over the Creation by His righteousness and sacrifice in obedience to the Father
 - He was exalted and has been given all authority by the Father
 - He will reign over all Creation
 - And in that day, every knee will bow
 - As Paul wrote

[Phil. 2:5](#) Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,
[Phil. 2:6](#) who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
[Phil. 2:7](#) but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.
[Phil. 2:8](#) Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
[Phil. 2:9](#) For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,
[Phil. 2:10](#) so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
[Phil. 2:11](#) and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- And in that day, Jesus will not be alone
 - He will bring His Gentile bride with Him, a bride that His Father will have given Him
 - The New Testament church of saints will accompany Christ in that rule
 - You and I who have been joined to Christ by our faith
 - We can look forward to that coming day every bit as much as Christ Himself does