

GENESIS

F O U N D A T I O N S

Chapter 40 Study Guide

August 1, 2004

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Genesis 40

1. EXEGESIS & PICTURES OF CHRIST

As we begin this chapter, watch for some familiar pictures of God's redemption and its cost. Look for images of bread and wine as this chapter details the dreams and the fate of a wine steward and the chief baker.

First, Joseph is asked to interpret the dream of the wine steward. Now, you all remember Nehemiah and the 52 days, right? From that story we can remember some information about the role of a wine steward. Usually, the wine steward was a confidant of the royalty; this wasn't just a guy with a cup and chain around his neck. For more information on a wine steward, read the following excerpt:

"An officer of high rank with Egyptian, Persian, Assyrian, and Jewish monarchs. The cup-bearer of the king of Egypt is mentioned in connection with Joseph's history ([Gen 40:1-21](#); [41:9](#)). Rabshakeh (q.v.) was cup-bearer in the Assyrian court ([2Ki 18:17](#)). Nehemiah filled this office to the king of Persia ([Neh 1:11](#)). We read also of Solomon's cup-bearers ([1Ki 10:5](#); [2Ch 9:4](#))." - Eastons Dictionary

Isn't it interesting that in his dream, the wine guy has a cup into which he squeezes the grapes of three vine branches? What's going on here? Hmm . . . three of this, three of that . . . You know that three day thing is woven into the fabric of the Scriptures:

Abraham / Isaac – three days' journey

Jonah – three days in the tummy of the fish

Jesus – three days in the heart of the earth

(We may also speculate that Joseph was three days in the pit!)

Next up is the baker and his dream. By the way, here's some interesting background information. In verse 16 we read about a "white basket," which in Hebrew can also mean as a "basket full of holes." Now let's paint a picture: in Egypt, birds were considered royalty; people could not kill them or even shoo them away. As baskets of bread were carried on top of the head, the birds would swoop down and help themselves. The results may have been that when the bread was delivered, it was "full of holes."

At this time, you are probably asking, "What's the point?" Well, remember, it is not hard to see Jesus on every page of the Scriptures. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Torah. In His own words, Jesus said, "I did not come to abolish Torah but to fulfill it." (see Hebrews 10:5-7 and Matthew 5:17)



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Now this may be maybe a bit mystical, but this story is also about bread and wine. The wine is poured out and the wine steward is saved (just as the blood of Jesus washes away our sin). On the other hand, the bread (possibly full of holes . . . Have you ever looked closely at matzo? It is both stripped and pierced! See Isaiah 53 and Zechariah 12:10) The bread (or Jesus' body) is broken and what was the fate of the baker? He was hung on a tree! Do you see a connection?

But just as the story begins, our boy Joseph is in the same place as this chapter comes to an end – in prison!

Soul-Winner So What

When God puts you through His leadership development plan, you never graduate and some classes last longer than others.

Small Group Question

What other references to bread and wine from Genesis can you recall? How does Isaiah 53 and Zechariah 12 relate to this Genesis text?

2. THEME & AUTHORSHIP

Themes

A couple of predominate themes are found in Genesis. First is that this is a Book of Beginnings, the great introduction to the drama of redemption.

Second, God is preparing a people. He chooses and tests them. Whether it is Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or Noah, God chooses, winnows and purges. Remember, His goal is to create a people who would fulfill Genesis 3:15. This is the initial step for man's redemption by a divine covenant made with a chosen race whose early history is here portrayed.

Author – Moses / **Date** - 1450 – 1410 BC

3. WORD STUDIES

Word: Read it.

Soul-Winner So What

It is interesting to note that high places are often slippery places.



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Those that make God's favor their happiness and his service their business see that God is a much better master than Pharaoh or any other human ruler. Guard yourself in choosing whose favor gives you joy.

Small Group Question

1. Do you seek God's approval or man's in your work?
2. What is the main lesson we learn from this chapter?

4. Gospel & Culture

We learned from chapter 37 that in many ways, Joseph is a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ. Joseph was a beloved son who was hated and rejected by his own brothers. They sold him into slavery, but the next they met him, he was their authority. Joseph had to suffer before he entered into his glory. He was a humble and faithful servant, even in during persecution (in prison). He was later exalted to his throne and was responsible for the nations. His brothers did not recognize him the first time, but later he revealed himself to them.

Note Joseph's humility in verse 8.

- What promise do we see in 1 Peter 5:5b regarding humility?
- What does the *therefore* of verse 6 define for us?

In 1 Peter 5:6, *under the mighty hand of God* is an OT symbol of the power of God working in the experience of men, always accomplishing His sovereign purpose.

- Have you *cast all your care upon Him* in the midst of your trouble or testing?
- What does testing produce within a believer? 1 Peter 5:10
- Are you or have you resisted God's work of producing humility in your life?

What comparisons can you draw between Jesus and Joseph in the following passage? What does it tell you about your own life?

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Phil 2:5-11

Soul-Winner So What

How can you answer the skeptic who says: If there is a God, why does He allow so much suffering in the world?



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5. Attributes of God

God can speak into our dreams.

God can give us the wisdom to speak into others lives.

¹²And Joseph said to him, "This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days.

¹⁸So Joseph answered and said, "This is the interpretation of it: The three baskets are three days.

Soul-Winner So What

Joseph helped the chief butler when he was in prison, but once the butler was released, he forgot about helping Joseph. God is concerned with our faithfulness in the "little" things. We need to always remember the people that God has put in our lives and how they have helped us.

Small Group Question

Who has helped you in your life? How will you show those people your appreciation?

6. BIBLE DIFFICULTIES/PROBLEM PASSAGES

This chapter is similar to chapter 39 in that Joseph is passed by. He asked the butler to remember him and make mention of him to Pharaoh (v-14), but the butler quickly forgot Joseph (v-23) until his memory was prompted just at the right moment (two years later). The Bible repeatedly tells us that we are to remember at all times and through all circumstances who God is. We must remember that He is sovereign in and over all human circumstances that befall us. If we see circumstances that are plainly evil, we are still to rejoice in the God who stands above evil, grief and sorrow. Remember, Jesus wept over Lazarus; we should not be flippant or deny that suffering exists, but be motivated to give God praise and honor, trying to overcome the pain of a situation by that practice.

Soul-Winner So What

Do you blame God for bad things that happen in your life or do you trust God and His sovereign will? How is your witness in this area? Do you allow His light to shine through the darkness?

Small Group Question

Are you or someone in your life going through pain or tragedy? What Bible scriptures can you give them for meditation and allowing God to speak comfort to them? Remember, sometimes we don't need to say anything at all, but simply offer our presence as a comfort.

