

# GENESIS

F O U N D A T I O N S

## Chapter 40 & 41 Study Guide

August 8, 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.

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

*<sup>18</sup>So 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.



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## Genesis 41

### 1. EXEGESIS & PICTURES OF CHRIST

Graduation has arrived! Joseph has spent the last 13 years of his life going through God's school of leadership development. In this chapter, he has one last exam and then . . . graduation!

Joseph had thirteen years of preparation – thirteen years full of pits, prisons, dungeons, Ishmaelites . . . and who could forget the episode with Potiphar's wife? There were times when Joseph must have felt like throwing in the towel.

The chapter opens with Joe still languishing in prison due to the forgetful wine steward. But then, Pharaoh has two dreams and things begin to change. (The fact that he had two dreams should not surprise us since, as a 17-year-old, Joseph had two dreams, then the cupbearer and the baker presented two dreams. Joseph probably had this "two" thing down!)

The dreams aren't so significant, but the fact that the Egyptian magicians couldn't venture an interpretation is a bit shocking. (Have you ever hear of a tarot card reader or a fortune teller who couldn't give an interpretation of a dream?) This is probably an indication that God was in the middle of the situation!

It is interesting to note that when Joseph was called, he was shaved (an Egyptian custom not kosher for a Jew – but that commandment comes later) and brought before the Pharaoh. At this time, a younger Joseph may have grandstanded a bit, but due to his extensive schooling (remember the last 13 years?), Joe has learned humility and acknowledges to Pharaoh that a dream's interpretation it is only through God.

Joseph explains and within the hour he goes from slave to second-in-command of all of Egypt. He, too has a name change; he is now called Zaphenathpaneah – which probably means "revealer of dreams." Soon he will have a wife, kids and in the coming chapter, a long awaited family reunion! All of this was part of God's plan! God brought Israel into Egypt through a teenage slave, and at the end of the book he will be bring a nation out of Egypt who would be his "chosen people."

Congratulations, Joseph! We are here today because you graduated from God's School of Leadership Development!

[Soul-Winner So What](#)



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God's ways are not our ways and his thoughts are not ours. And, for the record, his curriculum is not ours! What are you learning in God's School of Christian Development?

## 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.

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## 3. Theology

*And the doubling of Pharaoh's dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about. Genesis 41:33*

Throughout the centuries, pastors, priests and theologians have emphasized different aspects of God's sovereignty (His power and control in the universe) and humankind's free will (our ability to make free choices). In current times, those that emphasize God's controlling sovereignty are often times labeled Reform or Calvinists, while the extreme opposite view is Armeniast or Openness (meaning that the future is wide open). However, both camps believe that certain things and events will be fixed or orchestrated by God for His glory. In Genesis 41 and in the later chapters of Genesis, we can see this providential, guiding hand of God very clearly.

### Soul-Winner So What

God has fixed certain things in our lives so that we and others may come to know Him as Lord. Our responsibility is to be a witness to the Light (John 1:7).

### Small Groups Question

What events, opportunities, or decisions is God bringing in our lives for us to be a witness to the Light?

## 4. WORD STUDIES

vs. 1 *When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream.*

Consider that it took two full years for Joseph to be lifted from jail and to a higher position. Joseph had patience and waited for the Lord to fulfill his promise.



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### Soul-Winner So What

Have patience. Two years is not long to wait for what the Lord is doing! Remember to wait on the Lord and not supersede Him with your own pragmatic plan.

### Small Groups

What are you praying for that seems to be taking too long? Have you giving up on this or are you praying consistently? What might the Lord be teaching you in this waiting period? What did Joseph learn?

## 5. Gospel & Culture

Joseph had hoped that the butler would remember and intercede for him (40:13-15), but the man did not remember Joseph until the day Pharaoh became disturbed by not finding the meaning of his strange dreams. Note Joseph's humility as he stood before the mightiest monarch on the earth: *"It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace."*(v. 16) God directed Pharaoh to appoint Joseph, so now Joseph was exalted to the throne.

Read: 1 Peter 5:6

The recipients of Peter's letter were facing problems from the outside, but were warned not to fight God's sovereign hand even in the midst of testing.

1. What does impatience with God and His sovereign work reveal of an individual?
2. What does Joseph's longsuffering reveal of his character, trust and submission to the sovereign hand of God?

According to 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

1. For what purpose would God allow *a thorn in the flesh*?
2. As Paul was denied his request, and even Jesus His own request in Gethsemane, what was provided to endure that which they faced?
3. Do you see this in your own life?
4. Just as Paul did not rejoice in the suffering, he persevered. For what purpose?
5. How can you keep an eternal perspective in the midst of trials and testing?

Read: John 12:23-26

Like a grain of wheat, Joseph "died" that he might not abide alone. God kept His word to Joseph, and Joseph's dreams came to fruition.

### Soul-Winner So What

All of these happenings in Joseph's life were part of a greater plan, a plan to preserve Israel and prepare the way for the birth of Christ. When you are experiencing trials, remember that the Lord has a greater plan in mind.



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### 6. Attributes of God

God sometimes allows us to have prophetic dreams.

<sup>1</sup> Then it came to pass, at the end of two full years, that **Pharaoh had a dream**; and behold, he stood by the river.

God uses the number 7. The number 7 is used 28 times in this chapter (and 28 is divisible by 7, also!)

God gives dream interpretations.

<sup>16</sup> So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me; **God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace.**"

God repeats his message so we can understand.

<sup>32</sup> **And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice** because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

God can bring things to pass.

<sup>32</sup> **And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice** because the thing is established by God, and **God will shortly bring it to pass.**

God's spirit can be inside of us.

<sup>38</sup> **And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?"**

God reveals things to us.

<sup>39</sup> **Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you.**

God can make us forget our hard times.

<sup>51</sup> **Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house."**

God can make us fruitful.

<sup>52</sup> **And the name of the second he called Ephraim: "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."**

### Soul-Winner So What

In verse 38, Pharaoh recognizes that the spirit of God is in Joseph. When we ask Christ to be our Savior, God sends His spirit to live inside of us. People that surround us (family, friends, coworkers, etc.) should be able to see God in us.

### Small Groups Question

How do people see God in you? At home? At work? In your community?



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### 7. BIBLE DIFFICULTIES/PROBLEM PASSAGES

Magicians were common in palaces and were known as wise men, interpreting dreams, predicting the future, etc. However, their powers were from Satan. Joseph's abilities were from the Lord, as he acknowledged in v. 16.

God blessed Joseph with 2 sons with appropriate names.

Manasseh – for God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house

Ephraim – for God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of affliction

#### Soul-Winner So What

Would you have continued to serve the Lord if you were sold into slavery by your own brothers, enslaved for 11 years for telling the truth, and imprisoned for 2 years for something you didn't do? Despite all that happened to Joseph, he stayed faithful to the Lord and was elevated far beyond what he ever thought possible. Then, when given praise, he redirected it to his God. (Gen. 41:16)

#### Small Groups Questions

Would a non-believer put you in charge of his/her life because of your godliness?

Remember the saying: Witness at all times. Use words when necessary.

With no help of a Bible, church or encouraging brothers, how was Joseph able to remain faithful throughout his trials?

How much time do you give God to deliver you in your trials?

Our most important opportunities may come when we least expect them. With no time to prepare, Joseph was ready for anything due to his right relationship with God. When you're constantly learning about God, you never have to worry about not being ready when opportunity knocks.

### 8. Additional Questions/Ideas

#### Soul-Winner So What

God was with Joseph in prison as well as in Potiphar's house. Both times, Joseph clearly set in his heart and will to be helpful. The conviction that God is with us in every circumstance frees us to keep on doing our best, however great our setbacks may be. In one day, Joseph was elevated from the prison to the palace, but it took God thirteen years to bring him to that place of service. Joseph's faithfulness prepared him for the sudden advancement he experienced. James 4:10 says, *When you bow down before the Lord and admit your dependence on him, he will lift you up and give you honor.* (NLT) If we cannot be faithful in small things, we cannot expect great things to follow.

#### Small Groups Question



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Discuss some of the difficulties you may have in being faithful in hard times.