
Day 18 - January 18

Period of the Patriarchs (2100 -1525 BCE)

Joseph the Egyptian Ruler

Readings: *Genesis 39:1-23; 40:1-23; 41:1-57; 42:1-5*

Reflections:

- Joseph as we will see is a kind of Christ figure. He will be a savior of his family and his people. He is described now as noble and the ideal Israelite. His youthful pride has passed and he is now a mature, handsome and incredibly responsible and honorable man. He moves quickly from worthless slave to a valuable leader within the home of a very influential Egyptian leader's home.
- Potiphar's wife attempts to seduce Joseph but he remains steadfast in his loyalty to his master. The reader is to look at Joseph again as the ideal Israelite. He is brilliant, successful, and completely committed to God. Also, Joseph's faithfulness to God resulted in the entire Gentile home being blessed. Those who live according to God's principles bring blessing and grace to those around them.
- Notice that his reason for rejecting Potiphar's wife was not fear of his master but fear of God. This is a key to dealing with sexual purity. As long as the primary reason for remaining pure is the fear of being caught, a person will remain emotionally vulnerable to temptation. Only a deep love for God can provide a powerful enough motivation to deal with sexual temptation. Notice as well that Joseph didn't just resist her but he stayed away from her. The Biblical strategy for dealing with sexual temptation is to run as fast as you can away from it. The more distance there is between a person and the temptation, the less power the temptation has. As Paul wrote Timothy, "Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (2 Timothy 2:22)
- Potiphar's wife was consumed with lust for Joseph which when spurned turned to hate. We see that lust is completely self-centered and therefore has nothing to do with love. True love rejects lust and seeks true intimacy. Lust is only concerned about self-gratification and therefore can easily turn to a desire to control, use, abuse, and hate when no longer needed or wanted.

- Joseph is falsely accused and thrown in prison. Yet this cannot stop God blessing Joseph. Even in prison Joseph quickly gains the trust of the prison warden and soon is serving responsibly. We see that those who have true Godly character and significant leadership gifts easily find their way into positions of trust and responsibility. This is a good reminder that we don't have to strive for positions of influence. If we are faithful, God will put us in positions appropriate to his purposes.
- Joseph's ability to interpret dreams is ultimately rooted in his ability to hear God and understand what God is saying. Key verse: "Do not interpretations belong to God?" (Genesis 40:8)
- The baker's dream and interpretation are disturbing. Dreams (or night visions) and visions in Scripture are often rich and vivid in symbolism. We will see in future prophetic visions that images of judgment are often disturbing and graphic. These dreams not only serve as a warning to those who received them but they also remind us as readers that falling into judgment, whether to God or simply those in authority can be frightening.
- The cupbearer forgetting Joseph for over two years is no doubt a huge blow to Joseph. He has been faithful and yet he remained trapped in prison. Faithfulness is not an immediate guarantee of an easy life. Sometimes life is hard and there is no way to escape it. Joseph was faithful to God, not as a way to be blessed but because he loved God and he wanted to honor God in everything. Joseph could have become bitter with God and filled with anger over being forgotten. Yet, he remained faithful to God.
- Joseph ultimately is remembered and is used by God to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh. Here we see that in God's time and in God's way, nothing is impossible. God's purposes will be fulfilled.
- Note: "The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon." This is an important principle to keep in mind. For example, the vision of the book of Revelation is divided in two major sections where it appears that the vision repeats the same events but with a different form. This again probably indicates the certainty of God's plan to judge Israel and bring the destruction of the temple. With this said, it is also a reminder that when God speaks to us we must keep in mind that at times things are early enough in the process to still be optional and then later in the process matters may be firmly decided by God. We can't be the judge but must seek God's wisdom and leadership to discern how we are to proceed.
- Joseph's wisdom in managing the affairs of the state of Israel will find parallel to King Solomon. Joseph here is depicted as a very wise and organized leader. Again we see the power of a godly leader to bless those they serve.
- There is an interesting note about Joseph having two sons with his wife, the daughter of a priest of On. Potiphara is a name found on a number of Egyptian monuments. Joseph is married to a Gentile whose father was a pagan priest. This was probably scandalous to the

Israelites. Yet through this woman he has two sons who will become tribes of their own. There will ultimately be no tribe of Joseph but two smaller tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim.

- Joseph's wisdom in storing the grain results in Egypt gaining incredible wealth through a time of famine as people are forced to come to the storehouses Joseph had built to purchase food. In time, Joseph's own brothers must come on direction from their father. Jacob keeps Benjamin at home though. After losing Joseph he is no doubt afraid of losing another one of his most beloved sons. When we experience loss it is easy for us to start to become more and more fearful and controlling. We must come to the place where we can truly trust God again and understand that trying to protect ourselves and those we love will do nothing to prevent further loss. Only by trusting God can we live in the freedom he desires us to have.