

Bi121 Old Testament

Lesson Bi121- 15 Joseph Interprets Dreams (Genesis 40-41)

God still does miracles! The challenge is learning to wait for the time God has appointed for *your* miracle. Joseph waited a long time for his miracle. His special childhood dreams may have seemed a distant memory. Life in prison was hard for Joseph but it could have been worse. He was in a special prison and God's hand was on him. His jailor came to respect him and started to use him as an assistant. Before long, Joseph was placed in charge of all those held in the prison and all that was done there.

One day Pharaoh became angry and put both his chief butler and baker in the prison. While there, each man had a dream. Joseph asked to hear their dreams. The butler said, "I saw three branches on a vine. They blossomed and then had grapes. I squeezed the grapes into Pharaoh's cup and served it to him."

"Ah," said Joseph, "the three branches are three days. In three days, Pharaoh will take you out of prison and give you back your old job. Please, remember me, and ask Pharaoh to set me free from this prison. I have done nothing wrong."

After hearing this, the baker wanted to tell his dream too. "I had three baskets of bread on my head. Birds flew up and ate all the bread from out of the baskets."

"Well," said Joseph, "the three baskets are also three days. In three days, Pharaoh will take you out of prison and cut off your head. He will hang your body on a tree and birds will eat your flesh."

So it all happened just as Joseph foretold it! Pharaoh restored the butler to his position, and hung the baker on a tree. You would think that the butler would have told Pharaoh about Joseph, but he did not. Then, two years later, Pharaoh had two dreams. He awakes after the first one, but goes back to sleep. He then has a second dream, but this time he is so troubled he cannot go back to sleep.

In the morning Pharaoh called for his counselors and told them his two dreams. They looked at each other embarrassed for none of them could figure out what the dreams meant. Suddenly the chief butler remembered Joseph.

"Pharaoh, while I was in prison I met a Hebrew prisoner who has the ability to interpret dreams." the butler said.

"Guards, quickly, go to the prison and bring this Hebrew to me!" Pharaoh ordered.

The guards raced to the prison and found Joseph. But he was in no condition to be brought before Pharaoh. He was filthy and his clothes ragged from living in prison. So he was given a bath, clean clothes to wear, and then brought before Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt, the greatest kingdom in all of the earth.

"Prisoner, give me the meaning of my dreams!" Pharaoh ordered Joseph.

"I cannot do it, but *God* will give Pharaoh the answer he is seeking." Joseph answered. "Tell me your dreams."

Pharaoh then described his first disturbing dream: "I saw seven fat cows coming out of the river and grazing in the grass along its banks. Then seven skinny cows came up out of the river and ate the fat ones. And yet, they were just as skinny as before."

"In my second dream I saw seven plump heads of grain growing on a stalk. Next, seven dried-up heads of grain sprouted up on a stalk next to it. The thin heads of grain swallowed up the healthy ones. And yet, they were as thin and dry as before."

"God is telling you what He is about to do." Joseph began. "The seven good cows and the seven good heads of grain are seven years of great abundance. After that, there will be seven years of famine, so severe that the good years will be forgotten. Therefore, look for a wise man to put in charge of the land. Have him organize the collection of food during the good years and store it up for the bad years. If you don't do this, the country will be ruined by famine."

Pharaoh and his officials were shocked at the meaning of the dream. Then Pharaoh said to his officials, "Are we able to find anyone better than Joseph for this job? He has the spirit of God within him." He turned to Joseph. "The people will submit to your commands. Next to me, you will be the most powerful man in Egypt." Then, in one moment, Joseph went from being a prisoner in Pharaoh's prison to becoming the second most powerful man in all of Egypt!

During the next seven years, Joseph traveled throughout the land, collecting and storing food. These were years of plenty. Joseph married and had two sons. The first he named Manasseh meaning "making to forget." The second son he named Ephraim meaning "twice fruitful." In these names he expressed his faith in what God would do in his own situation.

Then, just as God had shown him, the seven years of famine started. This famine affected all the surrounding countries, including Canaan. When the people of Egypt started to feel the famine, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold them grain. Soon all the people around Egypt came and bought grain from Joseph.

This story is important because it shows God can inform His children about their future and how He will use them to accomplish His work. Joseph had experienced dreams before so he recognized the voice of God speaking through them. He knew his own dreams would be fulfilled. Then he saw that through the dreams of the butler, the baker and even Pharaoh, God's plan was being accomplished.

The main truth of this story is that God controls and directs the future of nations, families, and even individuals, for His purposes.

To review this lesson, answer these questions.

1. After interpreting the dream of the butler, what did Joseph ask him to do?
 - A. [Pause for 6 seconds.] If you said, “He told him, ‘Please, remember me, and ask Pharaoh to set me free from this prison. I have done nothing to deserve this’,” you are correct.
2. When Joseph was asked to interpret the dream of Pharaoh, what did he say?
 - A. [Pause for 6 seconds.] If your answer is, “*I cannot do it, but God will give Pharaoh the answer he is seeking,*” you are correct.
3. Why was Joseph the one chosen to prepare for the coming famine?
 - A. [Pause for 6 seconds.] If you said, “Pharaoh said, ‘He has the spirit of God within him’,” you are correct.
4. What did Joseph do to prepare for the coming famine?
 - A. [Pause for 6 seconds.] If you said, “During the next seven years, Joseph traveled throughout the land, collecting and storing food,” you are correct.

Your assignment for this lesson is to listen to the story at least three times. As you hear the story each time, imagine how it happened; see the events in your mind. Then tell the story in your own words as you remember it. Then listen to the story again and retell it until you feel sure you are repeating the circumstances and actions correctly. You should spend at least 45 minutes in learning the story. You may need to have someone check that you are telling the story correctly.

After telling this story to someone who has never heard it before, ask them this question. “What are you willing to believe God for in your future?” Discuss with them their answer in the light of this story where Joseph gives all the credit to God.