



Lesson 31

JOSEPH INTERPRETS DREAMS

Story Elements

- **TEXT:** Gen. 40:1-23
- **Setting:** circa 1730 B.C. in Egypt.
- **Main Characters:** God, Joseph, the chief butler, and the chief baker
- **Plot:** Joseph interprets the dreams of two of his fellow inmates; his interpretations prove true.
- **Key word(s):** “ _____ ”
(various forms vv 5, 8, 12, 16, 18, 22)
- **Climax:** *Genesis 40:19 Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.*

A Butler and a Baker

- 1) (39:21) While Joseph was imprisoned, the LORD was with him “and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.” Joseph was entrusted with most of the administrative responsibilities by the prison keeper, just as Potiphar had trusted Joseph with the administration of his estate. Wherever Joseph was “the LORD was _____.” (39:23)
- 2) (vv 1-4) In time, two notable inmates were added to the prison population: Pharaoh’s chief _____ (or cup bearer) and Pharaoh’s chief _____.

Three Branches and Three Baskets

- 3) (vv 5-7) One night, both the butler and the baker had strange _____ that left them afraid. Their sad faces were noticed by Joseph who inquired about their gloominess.
- 4) (v 8) The butler and baker spoke of having bizarre, troubling dreams, and they wished they could have them interpreted to dispel their dark confusion. Joseph answered, “Do not _____ belong to God? Tell them me I pray you.”
- 5) (vv 9-11) The butler spoke first:
 - a) His dream consisted of vine with three _____.
 - b) The branches blossomed and brought forth _____.
 - c) He squeezed the grapes into Pharaoh’s cup and served it to Pharaoh.
- 6) (vv 12-13) Joseph offered the interpretation:
 - a) The three branches represented three _____ within which the dream would be fulfilled.
 - b) The abundant vine and the serving of Pharaoh’s cup represented the _____ of the butler to his former place of service.
- 7) (vv 14-15) In return for giving the interpretation, Joseph asked the butler to “make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this _____.”

- 8) (vv 16-17) Encouraged by the positive interpretation, and hoping for the same, the baker recounted his dream:
- a) In his dream there were three bread-filled _____ sitting on top of his head.
 - b) Birds came and _____ the bread out of the baskets perched atop the baker's head.
- 9) (vv 18-19) Joseph's interpretation of the baker's dream was not positive:
- a) The three baskets represented three days within which the dream would be fulfilled.
 - b) The birds eating the bakemeats atop the baker's head represented the baker's ignominious death: "Pharaoh shall lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree, and the _____ shall eat thy flesh from off thee."

Aftermath

- 10) (vv 20-22) After three days, the interpretation of the dreams played out just as Joseph had said. The butler was restored, but the baker was _____.
- 11) (v 23) Sadly, the butler _____ all about Joseph and did not mention him to Pharaoh.

Application

- 12) When Joseph said, "Do not interpretations belong to God?" he revealed his remarkably steadfast faith in God. Despite all the injustices he endured, he simply trusted God. His resolute faith was not unlike Job, who said, "*Though he _____ me, yet will I trust in him.*" (Job. 13:15)
- 13) Not only do interpretations of dreams belong to God, but so do all of life's mysteries.

Deuteronomy 29:29 *The _____ things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

- 14) Joseph and his fellow inmates remind us of Jesus and the two thieves crucified with him – one thief was saved but the other died in his sin. Matthew Henry notes: "We justly blame the chief butler's ingratitude to Joseph, yet we conduct ourselves much more disingenuously towards the Lord Jesus. Joseph had but foretold the chief butler's enlargement, but Christ wrought out ours...yet we _____ him..."¹

Answer Key

Key word(s): interpretation | 1) with him | 2) butler; baker | 3) dreams | 4) interpretations | 5) a) branches; b) grapes | 6) a) days; b) restoration | 7) house | 8) a) baskets; b) ate | 9) b) birds | 10) hanged | 11) forgot | 12) slay | Deut. 29:29 secret | 14) forget

¹ Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994. Print.