

Faithful To The Message

Long Beach Alliance Church • October 8th, 2006 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**GO, STAND AND SPEAK
TO THE PEOPLE IN THE
TEMPLE THE WHOLE
MESSAGE OF THIS LIFE.
~ACTS 5:20 (NASB)**

1) Friends In High Places

- A) Joseph, falsely accused of rape by Potiphar's wife, is placed in the "king's jail" (cf. Genesis 39:20) where God gives him favor with the chief jailer (39:21-23).

- B) While in jail, Joseph (who is around 28 years old*), meets two men who have both committed some sort of unnamed crime (not necessarily the same crime) against the king of Egypt, also known as Pharaoh (40:1-2).

- C) Joseph has the chief cupbearer and chief baker placed under his charge by Potiphar (40:3-4). The men (all three) are in jail together "for some time" (40:4).

* "As we engage the story, eleven years have passed since Joseph was sold into slavery. We do not know how those eleven years were divided between serving in Potiphar's household and in prison. But we do know that Joseph is now twenty-eight years old, because two years after the events of Genesis 40, at the age of thirty, he will ascend to the service of Pharaoh." (*Genesis*. By R. Kent Hughes, pg. 468).

Represents the chronology of K.A. Kitchen in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (Volume 2, D-G, Pages 328-330). Duplicated from John Walton's *Chronological & Background Charts of the Old Testament* (pages 62-63).

2) A Diagnosis Without A Prognosis

- A) On the same evening, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker have different dreams (40:5). The mystery of the dreams deeply trouble both men† (40:6).

- B) So troubling are the dreams to both men, their physical appearance (40:6) is obviously changed (lit., "ill" or "frustrated/perplexed to the point of anger and frustration").

- C) Seeing this, Joseph compassionately asks his fellow prisoners, "why the long faces?" Joseph's selflessness, his compassion despite his own personal difficulties, unlock the response of the men (40:7-8).

- D) The men present their dilemma to Joseph -- dreams without interpretations. A message from the gods, and no one to interpret what they are saying... (40:8).

3) It's Not About You Or Me, It's About God...

- A) Joseph's faithful response to the dream dilemma is powerful on several levels (40:8).
 - i) First, giving God credit for interpretation would have been exactly the opposite of Egyptian "science." Joseph was confronting the godlessness of his culture.
 - ii) Second, the response shows that Joseph did not resent God for his plight, but rather was depending on God in

† Ancient Egyptians placed great significance on the content of dreams because they believed that sleep put them into contact with another world where not only the dead, but also the gods, dwelt. Dreams were gifts from the gods to them. In addition to this, a pair of dreams by two people in the same place indicated certainty of fulfillment. The problem for the two prisoners was not that they were having the dreams, but that there was no one to interpret the dreams. Since they were confined in prison, with no apparent end in sight, there would be no possibility of consulting with any of Pharaoh's dream interpreters (the experts) or consulting the special volumes which were written regarding the symbolism of dreams (the best "science" of the day). The men were effectively cut-off from being able to understand what the dreams were about -- they were left locked up without the ability to unlock their dreams. (Collected from various sources, esp. *Genesis*, by Gordon Wenham, pgs. 382-383 & *Genesis*, by John Walton, pgs. 672-673).

faith through his difficulties.

- iii) Third, Joseph's response shows a "God reflex." How you respond in the 'heat of the moment' reveals the heart.

- iv) Fourth, Joseph trusted that God would reveal the truth of the cupbearer & baker dreams. He had no guarantee, but he lived by faith in God. Faith is not expressed in what we know God will do, but in what we must depend on God to gift us for accomplishment.

- v) Fifth, Joseph's response revealed his faith that God is in control of all circumstances -- including (implicitly) his own dreams about his long-ago-lost family.

4) Two Dreams & Two Destinations For Two Heads

- A) The cupbearer shares his dream about the grapes & serving juice to Pharaoh (40:9-11). Joseph provides the cupbearer with a favorable interpretation of restoration (he will lift **up** your head/40:12-13).

- B) Knowing that the chief cupbearer will return to his place of trusted influence, Joseph pleads his own dilemma of being "taken" from his family and false imprisonment (40:14-15) in the hope for release from Pharaoh.

- C) Hearing the favorable dream interpretation of the cupbearer, the chief baker shares his dream about bread & birds eating from the top basket of bread (40:16-17). Joseph provides the baker with an unfavorable interpretation of destruction (he will lift **off** your head/40:18-19).

- D) Joseph's interpretations are given faithfully. He never mixes the message with the messenger. He is faithful to delivering the message, despite the consequences or responses.

- E) All Joseph spoke comes to pass, just as the interpretations had predicted (40:19-22). However, the baker forgets about Joseph (40:23). Man abandons Joseph, but God does not.