

Church of God Sunday School

JOSEPH IS REWARDED

Genesis 41:1 — 42:26

Have you ever done what you knew was right yet everything still seemed to go wrong? For many years Joseph was in Pharaoh's prison. Potiphar had put Joseph there for a crime he did not commit. Joseph had made the right choice by running from Potiphar's wife. So why was he put into prison like a criminal?

While Joseph was a prisoner, with God's help, he told the meanings of the dreams for two other prisoners: Pharaoh's butler and Pharaoh's baker. Both interpretations came true. Joseph asked the butler to mention him to Pharaoh when he was restored to his post. But the butler forgot all about Joseph for two long years.

Then, something happened that caused the butler to remember Joseph. Pharaoh had two dreams that troubled him. He sent for all his magicians and wise men, but they could not tell him what the dreams meant. When the butler heard about Pharaoh's dreams, he went to Pharaoh and told him how Joseph had rightly interpreted his own dream and the baker's when they were in prison.

When Pharaoh heard what the butler had to say, he sent for Joseph to be brought out of the dungeon. Pharaoh told Joseph he had heard that Joseph could interpret dreams, but Joseph said, "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

In Pharaoh's first dream, he stood on a riverbank and saw seven fat kine (cows) come out of the river and feed in a meadow. Then seven skinny, scrawny cows came out of the river and ate the fat cows, but they were still as scrawny as ever! In Pharaoh's second dream, he saw seven full ears of corn come up on one stalk. Then seven thin ears of corn came up behind the good ears and devoured them.

After Pharaoh told Joseph the two dreams, Joseph said, "God hath showed Pharaoh what he is about to do." The seven good cows and full ears of corn were

seven good years when plenty of food would grow in all the land of Egypt. The seven thin cattle and seven withered ears of corn represented the seven hard years of famine that would come everywhere. (A famine is when there is no food to eat, because the food does not grow.)

The seven years of plenty would come first, but the seven years of famine would be so terrible that the years of plenty would be forgotten! Pharaoh had two dreams, showing that it was established by God and that it would happen soon.

Joseph told Pharaoh he should choose a wise man to gather food during the good years and store it for the time of famine. Pharaoh was so pleased with Joseph's God-given wisdom that he put him in charge of gathering food for the coming famine. He made Joseph the second ruler in the land of Egypt.

Joseph was dressed in kingly robes, and Pharaoh put his own ring on Joseph's hand. This ring was not for adornment (decoration). It meant that all Egypt was

under Joseph's control. He could do business in Pharaoh's place. Only on the throne was Pharaoh more powerful than Joseph.

Pharaoh called Joseph Zaphnathpaaneah (*zaf-uh-nath-puh-NEE-uh*). Joseph was married to Asenath (*AS-uh-nath*), and they had two sons: Manasseh (*muh-NA-suh*) and Ephraim (*EE-free-uhm*). God was greatly blessing Joseph!

The seven years of plenty passed all too quickly. When the terrible famine came, the people of Egypt had plenty to eat because they had saved some food. But the famine was everywhere. How would people who did not live in Egypt survive the famine? They had to go to Egypt to buy corn.

In Canaan Joseph's family began to run out of food. Jacob sent his ten older sons to Egypt to buy



corn. When the brothers came, they bowed themselves before the governor who was selling the corn. Although Joseph recognized them at once, they didn't know the governor was their own brother. Joseph had been a teenage boy when they last saw him. Now, more than twenty years later, he was a grown man, dressed as an Egyptian, speaking the Egyptian language.

Joseph remembered his dreams. He must have also remembered how his brothers had made fun of those dreams. He spoke roughly to them, through an interpreter. He accused them of being spies. (A spy is someone who pretends to be someone he is not so that he can get information about a certain country or a certain person.)

The brothers told Joseph they did not come to spy on the land but to buy food. They said they were twelve brothers, the sons of one man who lived in Canaan. They said their youngest brother was back home with their father and another brother was dead.

Joseph still said they were spies and had them all put in jail for three days. Then Joseph told his brothers he had decided to keep just one of them as a prisoner. If they were honest men, they could take corn back to their families and bring their youngest brother the next time they came to Egypt.

The brothers began to talk among themselves and said: "This has all happened because of what we did to Joseph long ago. We saw his terror and anguish and heard his pleadings, but we wouldn't listen" (*The*

Living Bible). Reuben reminded his brothers how he had not wanted to harm Joseph, but his brothers would not listen.

As the brothers sorrowfully admitted their sin, they did not realize Joseph understood all that they were saying. He turned and went out from them and cried.

When Joseph returned to his brothers, he told them he was keeping Simeon. He had all their sacks filled with corn, and he returned their money; only they did not know it, for it was hidden in their sacks. Then Joseph sent them on their way.

Why didn't Joseph tell his brothers who he was? Why did he treat them as spies? Through Joseph, God was testing the brothers to see if they were truly sorry and if they had changed. God used Joseph to bring his brothers to a place of true repentance.

How easy it would have been for Joseph to have taken revenge on his brothers. He was the second ruler in Egypt. He could have denied them food or even had them killed. But he didn't! Joseph had been treated terribly. He was sold as a slave, lied about, and thrown in prison. Yet, he trusted God through it all, and God was able to use and bless Joseph in a wonderful way!

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**MEMORY VERSE:**

*"Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?"*

—Genesis 41:38

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