

Genesis - Chapter 40

Back to the prison: Joseph has been waiting patiently on us to get past the “hmmms!” section, so let’s not keep him waiting.

After he’s been there for some time, the Pharaoh is offended by his cupbearer and his chief baker. We don’t know what they did, maybe some backwash and some bad bread, but it’s not important.

The main thing is that they wound up in the same prison or dungeon or under house arrest at the same place as Joseph and the captain of the guard put them under Joseph’s care and he took care of them.

The text sounds a lot like they were under house arrest, but the point is that none of them are where they really wanted to be.

They’ve been there for some time and they each have a dream that trouble them the next day. Joseph notices and asks them what’s wrong.

When he hears that they’re troubled by their dreams he proclaims that interpretation belongs to God and that they should tell him the dreams.

Do you notice something different here? In the first 37 chapters of Genesis God walks with people, He appears to people, He eats with people, He speaks to people, He has conversations with people.

Until now.

We’re not told how Joseph is given the dreams’ interpretations and we’re never told that God appears to Joseph and he’s the first main character (I think) who isn’t recorded as having some direct contact and communication with God.

Be that as it may, he still gives the correct interpretation of the dreams and asks the cupbearer to remember him and to mention it to Pharaoh and get him out of jail.

Like the saying goes, “It pays to have low friends in high places.”

Joseph’s request to the cupbearer contains one of those “ding!” words. You’ll recall, I hope, that a ding word is one that’s supposed to make that little bell go off in our head and make us think of something else.

The word that Joseph uses when he says that he’s done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon is also translated as “pit” or “cistern” and should make you think back to his brothers throwing him in the empty pit or cistern. Evidently that’s still on Joseph’s mind; perhaps that was the defining traumatic event of his young life, Potiphar’s wife notwithstanding.

But there’s more.....

The word above is also used in the psalms as a synonym of death.

Remember that Jesus and Paul talked about the writings of Moses and the entire Old Testament as pointing ahead to Jesus and his life and especially his sacrificial death.

Consider the story of Joseph. He comes to his brothers from his father with the message of his dreams that are actually good news because their fulfillment will save all their lives.

The brothers hate him and can’t even speak to him and reject him and his message and by being thrown into the pit he is symbolically cast into the grave. This happens again in Egypt where he is falsely accused and again symbolically put into the grave, this time by the executioner or the government. You know the end of the story. He is brought out of the pit (same word), he is given a position of highest authority and honor at the right hand of Pharaoh and saves the lives not only of his brothers and their families but also the rest of known world who came to Egypt to buy grain. He is also reunited with his family and also has an

Egyptian family.

See the parallels.

Jesus came to the world, sent by His Father, with a message of salvation through himself. He was rejected by His own who knew Him not and they and the foreign government put Him to death. He wasn't left in the pit (grave) but was brought forth and given dominion, glory and honor. God brought good out of what His brothers intended for evil and He became the salvation not only of his brothers but also of the entire world who will accept Him. His is also the story of reconciliation not only between God and human but also between the two families, Jewish and Gentile.

If this seems a little far-fetched to you, just keep in mind that I'm not making it up. Jesus said that He was in the Old Testament and was fulfilling it.

Luke 24:25-27

Luke 24:44-47

John 5:39

Acts 17:2

Acts 18:28

I Corinthians 15:2-5

Mark 14:49

These parallels between Joseph and Jesus are referred to in the New Testament as shadows (Hebrews 10:1, Col. 2:17) and patterns (Romans 5:14)

Today we refer to them as types - the Old Testament symbolic prophecy and anti-types - the New Testament fulfillment.

The fulfillment of the type does not give a new meaning to the original as much as it amplifies and gives it a greater meaning. The original authors may not have always known exactly what they were pointing ahead to, there's just no way to know. They must have realized something about the coming Messiah because Jesus said so. Matthew 13:17

"These shadow included events [The Exodus, 1 Cor 10:11], persons [Adam, Rom 5:14], institutions [The priesthood, Hebrews 5-7], actions [Moses lifting up the brass serpent, John 3:14], and ceremonies [The Passover, 1 Cor 5:7] and served as prophetic symbols of events, persons, and institutions in the New Testament." - quoted from Principles of Biblical Interpretation

Another concept to keep in mind is that of dual fulfillment where a prophecy can have both a short-term or immediate fulfillment that took place in the Old Testament and also a long-term one that took place in the New Testament.

Once again, we know that because the Bible tells us that it is so. The most famous example and the only one that I'm going to take time to think about or look up is the Old Testament prediction that a virgin will bear a son. That was fulfilled a year after the prophecy was given when a regular young woman bore a son that marked the end of the threat to King Ahaz from Syria (Isaiah 7; II Kings) and then was taken up a notch and fulfilled when the virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus.

Anyway, to end this chapter, everything happens just as Joseph foretold and when the cupbearer gets back to court, he forgets all about Joseph for the next two years.