

Joseph's Rise and Fall and Rise Again

Genesis 39-41

I. Joseph in Potiphar's Household (Genesis 39)

1 Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the bodyguard, bought him from the Ishmaelites, who had taken him down there. 2 The LORD was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. 3 Now his master saw that the LORD was with him and [how] the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hand. 4 So Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge. 5 It came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house and over all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the LORD'S blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field. 6 So he left everything he owned in Joseph's charge; and with him [there] he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. 7 It came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me." 8 But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, with me [here,] my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. 9

- ◇ Joseph was sold as a slave by his brothers
 - ◇ No control over his own destiny, could have been bought by anyone – bought by high official
- ◇ Potiphar means 'devoted to the sun'
 - ◇ Head of Pharaoh's personal security
- ◇ No complaints from Joseph – put in a place of servanthood and was rewarded by God by faithfully serving there
 - ◇ Reflective of our own call to be servants
 - ◇ Matt. 20:26-28 - 26 "It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, 27 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."
- ◇ Joseph's faithfulness showed Potiphar that Joseph's God was real
- ◇ Potiphar probably had many slaves – unusual to make one oversee everything – shows a great trust in Joseph
- ◇ Joseph gaining skills in administrative work
- ◇ Abraham's offspring are becoming a blessing to the nations
- ◇ Maturing of Joseph? – humble enough to give credit to the Lord
 - ◇ Our lives can bring greater glory to our God when we openly give Him credit for good things that happen to us and through us
- ◇ Each time Joseph falls to a low position, he is then raised to a position of responsibility where he's at
 - ◇ Through the blessing and overruling of God, not by his own wits
- ◇ Same description of Rachel before Laban deceived Jacob
 - ◇ Similar description as Sarah – Abraham deceives the kings
 - ◇ Similar description of the fruit in Genesis 3 when Eve is deceived by the serpent

"There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?" 10 As she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie beside her [or] be with her. 11 Now it happened one day that he went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the household was there inside. 12 She caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside. 13 When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside, 14 she called to the men of her household and said to them, "See, he has brought in a Hebrew to us to make sport of us; he came in to me to lie with me, and I screamed. 15 "When he heard that I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled and went outside." 16 So she left his garment beside her until his master came home. 17 Then she spoke to him with these words, "The Hebrew slave, whom you brought to us, came in to me to make sport of me; 18 and as I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled outside." 19 Now when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spoke to him, saying, "This is what your slave did to me," his anger burned. 20 So Joseph's master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; and he was there in the jail.

- ◇ Possible that the wife had done this before and was used to getting her way
 - ◇ As a slave, Joseph would be expected to obey his master's wife in all things
 - ◇ Refusing = trouble
 - ◇ Doing so = betrayal of the master and sin against God
- ◇ Ancient Egyptian tale of Two Brothers – Anpu and Bata
- ◇ Joseph response shows that his priority is to God – how Adam should have in the garden
- ◇ Seems like he will say “sin against Potiphar” but switches it to God
 - ◇ Sinning against God's image (man and marriage) is the same as sinning against God himself
- ◇ Psalm 51:4 - “Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight, So that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge”
- ◇ Joseph's motive for good behavior wasn't fear or self-interest, but a sincere conscience
- ◇ Joseph actively avoided temptation
- ◇ Joseph fled from sin even though it would cause him embarrassment and imprisonment
 - ◇ We are also called to flee sin
 - ◇ 2 Tim 2:22 – “22 Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love [and] peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”
 - ◇ 1 Cor. 10:13 – “13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”
- ◇ Joseph's garment is again used as misleading evidence to deceive someone into believing a lie
 - ◇ Jacob deceived his gather with Esau's garment
 - ◇ Jacob's sons deceive him with the robe
 - ◇ Tamar deceives Judah with garments
- ◇ Make sport of = tsachaq
- ◇ Potiphar had every right to kill Joseph, but he spared him
 - ◇ Maybe knew his wife's character
 - ◇ The relationship and trust he had with Joseph was strong

21 But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer. 22 The chief jailer committed to Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in the jail; **so that whatever was done there, he was responsible [for it.]** 23 The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph's charge because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made to prosper.

2 The LORD was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. 3 Now his **master saw that the LORD was with him and [how] the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hand.** 4 So Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge. 5 It came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house and over all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the LORD'S blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field.

- ◇ Chapter 39 shows Joseph being put to the test and at the center of it we see his faithful response in passing the test, promising a future of being raised to an honorary position
- ◇ Parallels to Genesis 1-3

Gen 39	Gen 1-3
Joseph is put in second and command →	humans are appointed divine image over all creation
Potiphar doesn't 'know' of his household, but his food (his wife) →	Don't know good and evil are to eat of only the trees told to
Joseph beautiful of sight	Fruit is desirable
Joseph says: "How could I sin against God?"	God asks: "What is this thing you have done?"
Joseph didn't listen to the temptation	Adam listened to his wife
When the wife saw the garment, she took advantage	When Eve saw the fruit she gave into temptation

- ◇ Why is this important?
- ◇ Luke 24:37-47 – "44 Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." 45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem."
- ◇ All of the Bible points to the Messiah, here we see Joseph as a suffering servant, loyal and obedient to God, resisting temptation, suffering because of his integrity, elevated to a higher position because of his faithfulness, and goes on to save God's people – exact reflection of who Christ is on a larger scale
 - ◇ Paul describes Christ as an inverse Adam in Romans 5

II. Joseph in Prison (Genesis 40)

1 Then it came about after these things, the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt. 2 Pharaoh was furious with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker. 3 So he put them in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, in the jail, the [same] place where Joseph was imprisoned. 4 The captain of the bodyguard put Joseph in charge of them, and he took care of them; and they were in confinement for some time. 5 Then the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt, who were confined in jail, both had a dream the same night, each man with his [own] dream [and] each dream with its [own] interpretation. 6 When Joseph came to them in the morning and observed them, behold, they were dejected. 7 He asked Pharaoh's officials who were with him in confinement in his master's house, "Why are your faces so sad today?" 8 Then they said to him, "We have had a dream and there is no one to interpret it." Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell [it] to me, please." 9 So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, "In my dream, behold, [there was] a vine in front of me; 10 and on the vine [were] three branches. And as it was budding, its blossoms came out, [and] its clusters produced ripe grapes. 11 "Now Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; so I took the grapes and squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I put the cup into Pharaoh's hand." 12 Then Joseph said to him, "This is the interpretation of it: the three branches are three days; 13 within three more days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office; and you will put Pharaoh's cup into his hand according to your former custom when you were his cupbearer. 14 "Only keep me in mind when it goes well with you, and please do me a kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh and get me out of this house. 15 "For I was in fact kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon." 16 When the chief baker saw that he had interpreted favorably, he said to Joseph, "I also [saw] in my dream, and behold, [there were] three baskets of white bread on my head; 17 and in the top basket

- ◇ We don't know what offense was made – serious crime or something that the Pharaoh didn't like
- ◇ Though Joseph is still a prisoner, he is still put in authority over them
- ◇ In a place of authority, he still served others
- ◇ Throughout the Near East, it was believed that dreams had specific meaning and could help the dreamer predict the future
- ◇ Joseph is showing sympathy and servanthood to those around him even though he is in a bad position
- ◇ Joseph presents himself as God's agent
 - ◇ Israel is God's prophetic people through whom God's revelation comes to the nations
- ◇ God revealed himself in a relatable way to each person – terms they understand
- ◇ 3 days is enough time to prove if Joseph is right or wrong
- ◇ 'lift your head' – idiom that is used to often show forgiveness or release from something – to encourage or validate someone
 - ◇ Psalm 3:3 – "But You, O Lord, are a shield about me, My glory, and the One who lifts my head."
- ◇ First time we see Joseph show discontent with his situation
 - ◇ Seizes an opportunity to plead his case
 - ◇ Seeing God in our present circumstances doesn't mean that God wants us in those forever
- ◇ Dungeon = 'bor' – same word in Gen. 37 for the pit Joseph was thrown in
- ◇ Joseph answers in the same format with the same words

[there were] some of all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh, and the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head." 18 Then Joseph answered and said, "This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days; 19 within three more days Pharaoh will lift up your head from you and will hang you on a tree, and the birds will eat your flesh off you." 20 Thus it came about on the third day, [which was] Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants. 21 He restored the chief cupbearer to his office, and he put the cup into Pharaoh's hand; 22 but he hanged the chief baker, just as Joseph had interpreted to them. 23 Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

- ◇ Idiom is given a negative meaning
- ◇ Joseph was faithful to give a message of deliverance as well as judgment
- ◇ Bread and Wine – symbols of sustenance
 - ◇ Connected to the famine that is to come
 - ◇ Where else do we see bread and wine?
- ◇ Joseph's interpretation is proved right
- ◇ Centuries later John the Baptist is beheaded at Herod's birthday
- ◇ Did not remember = *zākar* – to mention, remember, to set aside

◇ Similarities to Jesus

Joseph	Jesus
Innocent man in prison that shared the conditions of other prisoners	Jesus was free of sin who came to our world to live among us and took on our sin
Joseph revealed a message of God to those in need	Jesus reveals the message of God, that of salvation
Joseph was proved true in three days	Jesus rose from the grave in three days
Joseph's message brought both life and death	Jesus' message brings life to those who believe (both innocent and guilty) and death to those who deny

III. Joseph and Pharaoh (Genesis 41)

1 Now it happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had a dream, and behold, he was standing by the Nile. 2 And lo, from the Nile there came up seven cows, sleek and fat; and they grazed in the marsh grass. 3 Then behold, seven other cows came up after them from the Nile, ugly and gaunt, and they stood by the [other] cows on the bank of the Nile. 4 The ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven sleek and fat cows. Then Pharaoh awoke. 5 He fell asleep and dreamed a second time; and behold, seven ears of grain came up on a single stalk, plump and good. 6 Then behold, seven ears, thin and scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them. 7 The thin ears swallowed up the seven plump and full ears. Then Pharaoh awoke, and behold, [it was] a dream. 8 Now in the morning his spirit was troubled, so he sent and called for all

- ◇ Cattle often submerged up to their necks in the Nile to escape the sun and insects
- ◇ Cattle also symbolic of various deities in Egyptian religion
- ◇ Khamsin Wind – sandstorm with intense winds, dry air, and scorching heat
 - ◇ Originates in the Sahara and blows over North Africa
- ◇ Probably priests who claimed to possess occult knowledge – trained in magical Spiritism, divination, and such

the magicians of Egypt, and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh. 9 Then the chief cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh, saying, "I would make mention today of my [own] offenses. 10 "Pharaoh was furious with his servants, and he put me in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, [both] me and the chief baker. 11 "We had a dream on the same night, he and I; each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his [own] dream. 12 "Now a Hebrew youth [was] with us there, a servant of the captain of the bodyguard, and we related [them] to him, and he interpreted our dreams for us. To each one he interpreted according to his [own] dream. 13 "And just as he interpreted for us, so it happened; he restored me in my office, but he hanged him." 14 Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph, and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon; and when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came to Pharaoh. 15 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." 16 Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer." 17 So Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, "In my dream, behold, I was standing on the bank of the Nile; 18 and behold, seven cows, fat and sleek came up out of the Nile, and they grazed in the marsh grass. 19 "Lo, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such as I had never seen for ugliness in all the land of Egypt; 20 and the lean and ugly cows ate up the first seven fat cows. 21 "Yet when they had devoured them, it could not be detected that they had devoured them, for they were just as ugly as before. Then I awoke. 22 "I saw also in my dream, and behold, seven ears, full and good, came up on a single stalk; 23 and lo, seven ears, withered, thin, [and] scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them; 24 and the thin ears swallowed the seven good ears. Then I told it to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me." 25 Now Joseph said to Pharaoh, "Pharaoh's dreams are one [and the same;] God has told to Pharaoh what He is about to do. 26 "The seven good cows are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one [and the same.] 27 "The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven thin ears scorched by the east wind will be seven years of famine. 28 "It is as I have spoken to Pharaoh: God has shown to Pharaoh what He is about to do. 29 "Behold, seven years of great abundance are

- ◇ Shows the superiority of Israel's God over that of other nations
- ◇ Two offenses – against Pharaoh and against Joseph for not mentioning him to Pharaoh
 - ◇ Mention = *zākar*
- ◇ Effecting Joseph's permanent release from prison
- ◇ Egyptians were normally smooth-shaven, while Palestinians word beards – also shows transition
- ◇ Joseph has been waiting a long time – at least 2 years
 - ◇ During times of waiting, believers often think God isn't doing anything
 - ◇ Sometimes waiting periods are a time of development for character or transforming His people to a more Christ like image – more prepared to do the work He has planned for them
- ◇ Joseph denies having any skill – attributes all to God
 - ◇ 2 Cor. 3:5 – "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God"
- ◇ Long famines were rare in Egypt because the Nile regularly overflowed annually
- ◇ Repetition is important in Joseph's narrative – shows emphasis
 - ◇ 2 Pharaoh dreams
 - ◇ 2 Dreams in prison
 - ◇ 2 Temptations – 2 denials
 - ◇ 2 Joseph dreams

coming in all the land of Egypt; 30 and after them seven years of famine will come, and all the abundance will be forgotten in the land of Egypt, and the famine will ravage the land. 31 "So the abundance will be unknown in the land because of that subsequent famine; for it [will be] very severe. 32 "Now as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, [it means] that the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about. 33 "Now let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. 34 "Let Pharaoh take action to appoint overseers in charge of the land, and let him exact a fifth [of the produce] of the land of Egypt in the seven years of abundance. 35 "Then let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and store up the grain for food in the cities under Pharaoh's authority, and let them guard [it.] 36 "Let the food become as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land will not perish during the famine." 37 Now the proposal seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his servants. 38 Then Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is a divine spirit?" 39 So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are. 40 "You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you." 41 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." 42 Then Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put the gold necklace around his neck. 43 He had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, "Bow the knee!" And he set him over all the land of Egypt. 44 Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, "[Though] I am Pharaoh, yet without your permission no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." 45 Then Pharaoh named Joseph Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, as his wife. And Joseph went forth over the land of Egypt. 46 Now Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt. 47 During the seven years of plenty the land brought forth abundantly. 48 So he gathered all the food of [these] seven years which occurred in the land of Egypt and placed the food in the cities; he placed in every city the food from its own surrounding fields. 49 Thus Joseph stored up grain in great abundance like the sand of the sea, until he stopped measuring [it,] for it was beyond

- ◇ Joseph is pretty bold in giving advice to Pharaoh – a King who has his own advisors
- ◇ Divine spirit – a spirit of god (of the gods)
- ◇ Pharaoh takes Joseph's advice and decides Joseph himself should be governor over Egypt
- ◇ Joseph's path from humble servant and prisoner to powerful ruler becomes a prophecy of Jesus Himself
- ◇ Pharaoh gives Joseph 3 signs of authority including new garments
- ◇ Joseph does a 180 – a slave and prisoner turned into the 2nd in command
 - ◇ Mirrors Christ
- ◇ Name change and wife to complete Joseph's transformation – ensures Egyptians will follow his orders
- ◇ Name probably means 'God speaks; he lives'
- ◇ Asenath probably means 'she belongs to (the goddess) Neith'
- ◇ Potiphera = 'he whom (the sun-god) Ra has given'
- ◇ Same simile used for the promised offspring to Abraham and Jacob
- ◇ Continued theme of blessing to many nations because of a faithful servant of God
- ◇ In the years of abundance, Joseph's family is also fruitful
- ◇ Manasseh = making to forget
 - ◇ No longer dwelling or defined by his past
 - ◇ A new son implies new gladness and his own family to replace what was lost
- ◇ Ephraim = fruitfulness or fertile land

measure. 50 Now before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On, bore to him. 51 Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh, "For," [he said,] "God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." 52 He named the second Ephraim, "For," [he said,] "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction." 53 When the seven years of plenty which had been in the land of Egypt came to an end, 54 and the seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said, then there was famine in all the lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. 55 So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried out to Pharaoh for bread; and Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, you shall do." 56 When the famine was [spread] over all the face of the earth, then Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians; and the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. 57 [The people of] all the earth came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the earth.

- ◇ Completely adapted into Egypt, but still gives his sons Hebrew names
- ◇ Didn't distribute the grain immediately – waited until the people began to ask for help
- ◇ The grain was acquired through taxes and then sold back to the people
 - ◇ Government covered its expenses for gathering and storing the grain
 - ◇ Possibly increased the Pharaoh's revenue in a time of famine
- ◇ 'all the earth' – in Noah's story, all the earth was destroyed and only Noah was saved
 - ◇ Here we see a descendant of Noah saving all the earth and blessing all the nations

