

# Genesis Ch41v1-57 - Blessing The Nations

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Date: 17 March 2024

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[ 0 : 00 ]     So, Genesis 41, it's a long chapter, and I'm going to read sections of it, but I'll tell you where we're going as we move along.

So, Genesis 41, we'll start with the first 16 verses, and then we'll move to others, but let's hear God's word to us this morning.

Follow along as I read, starting in verse 1. When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream. He was standing by the Nile, when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds.

After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows.

Then Pharaoh woke up. He fell asleep again and had a second dream. Seven ears of corn, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk.

[ 1 : 19 ]     After them, seven other ears of corn sprouted, thin and scorched by the east wind. The thin ears of corn swallowed up the seven healthy, full ears.

Then Pharaoh woke up. It had been a dream. In the morning, his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and the wise men of Egypt.

And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him. Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, today I'm reminded of my shortcomings.

Pharaoh was once angry with me, his servant, and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard. Each of us had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own.

Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream.

[ 2 : 22 ]     And things turned out exactly as he had interpreted them to us. I was restored to my position, and the other man was impaled. So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon.

When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I've heard it said of you that when you hear a dream, you can interpret it.

I cannot do it, Joseph replied to Pharaoh. But God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires. Now let's move down to verse 25.

Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, the dreams of Pharaoh are one of the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears of corn are also seven years.

It is one and the same dream. The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterwards are seven years. And so are the seven worthless ears of corn scorched by the east wind.

[ 3 : 41 ] They are seven years of famine. It is just as I said to Pharaoh, God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt.

But seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ravage the land. The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be so severe.

The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon.

And now, let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. Down to verse 39.

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, since God has made all of this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you.

[ 4 : 43 ] You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.

Verse 48. Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities.

In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea. It was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.

Verse 53. The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end, and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said.

There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food. Well, let's pray and ask for God's help to us.

[ 5 : 49 ] Let's pray. Father, thank you again for your word. We thank you that it is true.

And more than that, it is life-giving. And so we pray that as we hear your words to us today, you would show us the life you have given to us, the life that you have given to the whole world.

Father, may your word bless us today as we listen. In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, it's quite the story, isn't it?

From the pit of a prison to power in the palace. And if that doesn't impress you, all happened within 24 hours.

We could imagine Joseph at his first book launch down at his local Egyptian Eason's. The secret of my success. The true story of one man's journey from slave to master.

[ 7 : 02 ] Get your signed copies here. What a transformation. So, Joseph, tell me, how did you do it?

What was your secret? Well, it's the kind of story we would all dream of for ourselves. We would long for these sorts of things to happen to us.

We would long, too, that our struggles would come to an end. That things would dramatically change. That we would have a better life than the one we have right now.

So, Joseph, how did you do it? How did you manage to turn things around? To go from prison to palace? Well, as we'll discover in this account, it's not about Joseph at all.

It's about God. And it's not Joseph's secret to success. But God's story of salvation.

[ 8 : 07 ] In fact, this account is all about how God works through his servants to bless the nations. Three things we're going to look at that will show how this is true.

That first, God ordains the events of his servants. Second, God establishes the purposes for his servants. And then third, God blesses the nations by his servants.

So, let's look at these together. First, God ordains the events of his servants. Everything in this account is God's fingerprints all over it.

God decides what happens and when it happens. Look at verse 1. When two full years had passed. So, Joseph has now actually been in prison for 13 years for a crime he had never committed.

But just as God had overseen Joseph in prison, so God was going to take him out of prison. You see, everything happens according to God's timing.

[ 9 : 23 ] Verse 1. So, when the two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream. But the problem is, verse 8, nobody in all the land of Egypt could interpret Pharaoh's dream.

But, all of a sudden, verse 9, the chief cupbearer who had forgotten Joseph had suddenly remembered Joseph.

Pharaoh, Pharaoh, I know someone who can interpret dreams. And it's exactly as the dreams say. Now, there's Joseph.

Stuck in his dirty, grubby cell. Chalking off the days in his prison wall. Oblivious to the upset in the palace.

When all of a sudden, Joseph, get up here. Now. Well, Joseph, verse 14, is ushered along by the guards.

[ 10 : 31 ] Thrown into the shower room for a hose down. Given a shave and some decent clothes. But what's happening? Where am I going?

To see Pharaoh. He's got a problem. And you can help. Do you see how God is ordaining the events of his servants?

He's bringing all things together. And all the people together according to his timing. God is at work in Pharaoh's life. In the cupbearer's life.

In Joseph's life. God is the one who is over all these things. In fact, if we look a little closer to the dreams. We learn a little bit more.

The way in which God ordains everything. Three quick things here. First, God discloses what's going to happen.

[ 11 : 31 ] Look at verse 15. Pharaoh said to Joseph, I had a dream and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said that you can interpret it. I cannot do it, Joseph replied to Pharaoh.

But God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires. I can't. But God can. Only God reveals what will happen.

Only God knows the future. Now of course we have all kinds of people. Who will promise to predict the future for a few euro.

Especially religious people that we can see on God channel. They promise you all kinds of things about telling your future and what's going to happen next year.

It's all wild speculation. It's just imaginations and thoughts and ideas. God alone knows what will happen.

[ 12 : 32 ] But more than that, God directs what will happen. As Pharaoh retells his dream. Verse 25.

Then Joseph said to Pharaoh. The dreams of Pharaoh are one of the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what God is about to do.

You see, only God knows the future. But he is the one who's going to bring it about. You see, the dream isn't just information about the future.

But God's action to bring it to pass. Verse 28. It is just as I said to Pharaoh. God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do.

God is not only saying what will happen. God is saying, I will direct the very events themselves. Now you and I can't do that.

[ 13 : 34 ] We can't change any event or make any event happen tomorrow, next year. Never mind the events of the world. But God discloses and directs everything.

In fact, God determines what will happen. The dreams are clear in the interpretation. There will be seven years of good harvest and seven years of no harvest.

A time of abundance and a time of famine. But why were there two dreams saying the same thing? Well, we're given the answer, aren't we, in verse 32.

The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God. And God will do it soon.

I want you to be crystal clear in your understanding, Pharaoh. You may claim to be king of Egypt, but God determines the times and the events of this world.

[ 14 : 45 ] God has fixed the future. Every second and every century is known by God and is acted out by God.

Well, if God is in control of world events, how much more is he in control of my life and your life? Psalm 139 verse 16 reminds us, All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Isn't that amazing? That our life is ordained from beginning to end? God is in charge of the bad times when we're in the pit of life.

God is in control of the good times when we're enjoying the pleasures of life. We don't live in a world of random events and chance circumstances. No, God ordains everything.

You see, this is not about finding the secret to success. This is all about God who ordains the events of his servants.

[ 16 : 08 ] So, God ordains the events of his servants. Second, God establishes the purposes of his servants.

Well, God is clearly in control of all that's going on including the choices and decisions of Pharaoh. In fact, God uses the king of Egypt to establish his own servant in his place.

Verse 33. Joseph says, And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt.

Now, I don't think Joseph is seeking power here or an upgrade. I think Joseph is just stating the obvious implication of the dreams.

Look, Pharaoh, if there's going to be a famine, you're going to need to store up grain in the good years. You need a plan. You need somebody who's going to look after that.

[ 17 : 12 ] Positions and power were far from Joseph's mind. But yet it seems God is at work through Pharaoh to establish his servant. In fact, as we look more closely at the story, we see how God does this.

First, look at Joseph's rise to power. To say that Joseph had suffered was an understatement. He had 13 years in the pit of a prison, but all of that was to change.

Verse 39. Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you.

You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.

From the pit to power, from being a slave to a master, Joseph's life was radically changed in a matter of hours.

[ 18 : 21 ] Once in grubby clothes and in irons of chain. Now look at the end of verse 42. We find him dressed in a robe of fine linen, and not with chains of iron, but a gold chain around his neck.

In fact, Joseph went from a position of bowing down to others, to where the whole nation were bowing down to him. Look at verse 43.

Pharaoh made Joseph ride in a chariot. Today it would be a fine, long-stretched limousine. As his second in command. And people shouted before him, Make way, or bow down!

Thus, he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt. What an incredible transformation! But why are we surprised?

I mean, doesn't God ordain the events of all things? What God has firmly decided will come to pass? Now all of this was not for Joseph's sake, so that he could write bestsellers down at the local bookstore.

[ 19 : 42 ] No, this was all for God's saving purposes. You see, as Joseph came to power, God was putting his ruler in place.

You see, the author wants us to see that God's purpose is central. This is not a story about how God is going to give me power and riches.

No, this is a true story of God putting his ruler in the right place. Verse 42. Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger.

The signet ring was the king's official stamp. In other words, Joseph was acting on behalf of the king. What Joseph said, the king said.

Verse 44. Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, I am Pharaoh, but without your word, no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt.

[ 20 : 52 ] Joseph is given absolute power and complete authority. Don't you marvel at how the king of Egypt places God's servant into a position of being ruler of all Egypt?

You see, kings don't rule. God does. The leaders and governments of our world are not in charge. God is in charge. In fact, God will use the leaders and the kings and he will use their choices and decisions to bring about God's ultimate and greater purposes.

Now, if that is true for the world, how is that true for us? You see, if you are a Christian here today, then you are God's servant in God's place.

Where you live and where you are is not a mistake. It's not a chance. God has you where he has you for his purpose. For Joseph, that would be the experience of being in a pit and a palace.

God has you in his place. But wherever we are and whatever we do, God has you in his place. You see, this is not about finding the secret to success.

[ 22 : 18 ] This is about God who establishes the purposes for his servants. So, God ordains, God establishes.

And third, God blesses the nations by his servants. You see, as we follow in this story, like a master chess player, God is manoeuvring all the pieces and the people for his victorious move.

All the events and all the people served the great purposes of God. Look at verse 46. Joseph was 30 years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

And Joseph went out from Pharaoh's presence and travelled throughout Egypt. You see, God was going to bring blessing to and through his servant.

First, God's servant is blessed. Joseph is in charge of all Egypt. He's gone from the depths of the dungeon to the heights of the palace.

[ 23 : 32 ] What would Joseph be thinking as he saw his life unfold before him? Well, we're told. He's very clear about how it all happened.

Look down at verse 51. In between the years of abundance and famine, we're told that Joseph had two children.

Verse 51. Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household.

The second son he named Ephraim and said, It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering. You see, if Joseph was learning anything, it was learning that God made everything happen.

God was in control. All that Joseph received was by God's grace and God's goodness. Verse 51. God made me forget.

[ 24 : 41 ] God made me fruitful. We could imagine that every time Joseph went out to call his two boys in for dinner. Forgetful.

Fruitful. Every time he heard their names, he was reminding himself of God's intervention and God's blessing to him.

It was all of God's goodness and grace. How he took the troubles of Joseph's life and weaved them together for something beautiful and good.

How God had taken the hard times to bring about blessing for Joseph. But there was a purpose in blessing Joseph.

The purpose was that God's servant would bring blessing to others. You see, Joseph is blessed. But God has a much greater blessing in mind.

[ 25 : 46 ] Look how God provided. Verse 49. Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain. Like the sand of the sea, it was so much that he had to stop keeping records because it was beyond measure.

Verse 55. When all Egypt began to feel the famine, the people cried out to Pharaoh for food. Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, go to Joseph and do what he tells you.

When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians for the famine was severe throughout Egypt.

What a means of blessing Joseph became not just to his family, but to all the families of Egypt. If Joseph hadn't stored up that grain, the loss of life would have been countless.

Thousands upon thousands would have died. But God was thinking bigger and greater than just Egypt. The blessing extended beyond Egypt.

[ 27 : 03 ] Look at verse 57. And all the world, the surrounding nations, came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph because the famine was severe everywhere.

The surrounding nations came to God's servant who blessed them. Instead of death, there was life.

God's blessing to Joseph was overflowing to the whole world. Now, as great as Joseph was, the blessings that he brought were both temporary and costly.

People had to come with their money to buy their food, but hunger would soon return, wouldn't it? However, we're told of one who invites us to buy and to eat without any cost.

Look with me to Isaiah chapter 55. Isaiah chapter 55. Isaiah chapter 55. You see, what Joseph offered was temporary and costly.

[ 28 : 45 ] But there is one who invites us to buy and eat without cost. We're offered food that will fill us and satisfy us forever.

Isaiah 55 verse 1. God says through his servant, Come, all you who are thirsty. Come to the waters.

And you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread and your labor on what does not satisfy?

Listen, listen to me and eat what is good and you will delight in the richest affair. The promise of food.

Where do we get this bread? Well, listen to what Jesus said. I am the bread of life.

[ 29 : 48 ] I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world.

You see, the true and eternal food that God offers and that God gives is Christ. He gives life that is free and eternal.

You see, this account in Genesis is not about Joseph and the secret of his success. this is about God and the story of his greater servant Jesus Christ.

The one who comes to give food that will truly satisfy and will truly fill us not just for us but for the nations of the world.

for Jesus came into this world and went into the pit not of a prison but into the judgment of hell itself for you and for me.

[ 30 : 52 ] He suffered death on the cross for my sin and for your sin. But more than that Jesus was raised from the dead defeating death for us and now he reigns with absolute power and supreme authority not just over a palace but over the world and the universe.

And as ruler over all he comes to us in Christ and offers us the bread of life without cost. He invites us to come to him today needy and hungry to come empty seeking him who will fill you.

and as we turn to Jesus in faith so we receive his blessings forgiveness of all of our sin peace with God life eternal what a feast we have been invited to but this isn't a feast that we keep to ourselves is it?

As we receive so we give as God's servants are blessed in Christ so we go to be a blessing to the world and to the nations the blessings that we have received overflow from us as we show people and offer people Jesus the true bread of life isn't that what the church is called to do?

just like Patrick who came to the shores of this island 1500 years ago to preach the good news of the gospel so that the people of Ireland might receive and have the bread of life that would satisfy well so too for us today our country is needy there will be Patrick parades all around the country but how many of them will be offering the bread of life that is found in Christ so we go knowing that God has ordained every detail of our life we go confident that we are his servants in his place and we go as a blessed people to bless others as we show them Jesus who satisfies who fulfills us and gives us the life of Christ himself let's pray together

[ 33 : 47 ] Father God we are sorry for so often making your word out to be all about us about me help us to see afresh that it is all about God's great story his plan of salvation through his servant Jesus Christ who takes us from the pit of our sin and mess and brokenness and lifts us up to a greater palace of the kingdom of God itself where we are satisfied and fulfilled forever and forever thank you for Jesus the bread of life thank you that in him we have all that we need help us to go into our communities to our families to our workplaces help us to bring the blessing of Christ may it overflow from our life and may people taste and see that Jesus is good amen well we're going to sing this do he and he will