

Then it came to pass, at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh had a dream; and behold, he stood by the river. ² Suddenly there came up out of the river seven cows, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow. ³ Then behold, seven other cows came up after them out of the river, ugly and gaunt, and stood by the *other* cows on the bank of the river. ⁴ And the ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven fine looking and fat cows. So Pharaoh awoke. ⁵ He slept and dreamed a second time; and suddenly seven heads of grain came up on one stalk, plump and good. ⁶ Then behold, seven thin heads, blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them. ⁷ And the seven thin heads devoured the seven plump and full heads. So Pharaoh awoke, and indeed, *it was* a dream. ⁸ Now it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but *there was* no one who could interpret them for Pharaoh. ⁹ Then the chief butler spoke to Pharaoh, saying: "I remember my faults this day. ¹⁰ When Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and put me in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, *both* me and the chief baker, ¹¹ we each had a dream in one night, he and I. Each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his *own* dream. ¹² Now there *was* a young Hebrew man with us there, a servant of the captain of the guard. And we told him, and he interpreted our dreams for us; to each man he interpreted according to his *own* dream. ¹³ And it came to pass, just as he interpreted for us, so it happened. He restored me to my office, and he hanged him." ¹⁴ Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him quickly out of the dungeon; and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh. ¹⁵ And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and *there is* no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you *that* you can understand a dream, to interpret it." ¹⁶ So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "*It is* not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace." ¹⁷ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph: "Behold, in my dream I stood on the bank of the river. ¹⁸ Suddenly seven cows came up out of the river, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow. ¹⁹ Then behold, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such ugliness as I have never seen in all the land of Egypt. ²⁰ And the gaunt and ugly cows ate up the first seven, the fat cows. ²¹ When they had eaten them up, no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they *were* just as ugly as at the beginning. So I awoke. ²² Also I saw in my dream, and suddenly seven heads came up on one stalk, full and good. ²³ Then behold, seven heads, withered, thin, *and* blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them. ²⁴ And the thin heads devoured the seven good heads. So I told *this* to the magicians, but *there was* no one who could explain *it* to me." ²⁵ Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh *are* one; God has shown Pharaoh what He *is* about to do: ²⁶ The seven good cows *are* seven years, and the seven good heads *are* seven years; the dreams *are* one. ²⁷ And the seven thin and ugly cows which came up after them *are* seven years, and the seven empty heads blighted by the east wind are seven years of famine. ²⁸ This *is* the thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh. God has shown Pharaoh what He *is* about to do. ²⁹ Indeed seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt; ³⁰ but after them seven years of famine will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land. ³¹ So the plenty will not be known in the land because of the famine following, for it *will be* very severe. ³² And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing *is* established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass. ³³ "Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. ³⁴ Let Pharaoh do *this*, and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect one-fifth of *the produce* of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years. ³⁵ And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. ³⁶ Then that food shall be as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt, that the land may not perish during the famine." ³⁷ So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants. ³⁸ And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find *such a one* as this, a man in whom *is* the Spirit of God?" ³⁹ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, *there is* no one as discerning and wise as you. ⁴⁰ You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you." ⁴¹ And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." ⁴² Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph's hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. ⁴³ And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, "Bow the knee!" So he set him over all the land of Egypt. ⁴⁴ Pharaoh also said to Joseph, "I *am* Pharaoh, and without your consent no

man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.”⁴⁵ And Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphnath-Paaneah. And he gave him as a wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On. So Joseph went out over *all* the land of Egypt.⁴⁶ Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.⁴⁷ Now in the seven plentiful years the ground brought forth abundantly.⁴⁸ So he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities; he laid up in every city the food of the fields which surrounded them.⁴⁹ Joseph gathered very much grain, as the sand of the sea, until he stopped counting, for *it was* immeasurable.⁵⁰ And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him.⁵¹ Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: “For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father’s house.”⁵² And the name of the second he called Ephraim: “For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.”⁵³ Then the seven years of plenty which were in the land of Egypt ended,⁵⁴ and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. The famine was in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.⁵⁵ So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do.”⁵⁶ The famine was over all the face of the earth, and Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians. And the famine became severe in the land of Egypt.⁵⁷ So all countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy *grain*, because the famine was severe in all lands.

Introduction

Genesis 41: v.1 tells us that Joseph had been in prison for a full 2 years.

Joseph would have been waiting about 700 mornings and 700 evenings to be released from prison.

Waiting is a very difficult thing for most people.

We live lives that are very instant. The mobile phone, the internet, e-mails, face book, face time etc. We can now transfer money to bank accounts all over the world through internet banking.

All of these modern facilities make us expect to see things happen quickly.

When things don’t happen to our time scale, it is then that we learn the discipline of patience.

James 1: v. 3-4.

³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴ But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

James 1: v. 3-4 tells us that the testing of our faith produces patience.

James says that we must let patience have its perfect work, that we may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

We are told by these verses that patience is the result of the trials of life and if we will let patience work upon us we will be made perfect and want nothing.

I want to analyse a couple of Greek words used in James 1: v. 4 .

If we understand the original Greek meaning, then we will fully understand the spiritual significance.

The first is the word translated “Patience”, the Greek word is called “hupomonee”.

It actually means to “bear under”.

It gives us a picture of somebody who is carrying a very heavy load.

James is saying here, that as you carry this heavy load don’t remain stationary.

You need to move about and exercise with this heavy load.

The Christian must not be put off by the heavy load, but move in the direction that God is leading.

For Joseph God was opening doors in the prison, not to get out, but to serve God by attending to the other prisoners.

To illustrate what God means by patience we can look at three types of boats.

A rowing boat, a sailing boat and a steam boat are all boats that are designed to carry heavy loads.

However, the rowing boat can carry the least weight.

The reason for this is that its motion depends on the strength of the people who are rowing.
Strong people with big muscles can carry heavier loads in a rowing boat.
The sailing boat can carry a little more, because its motion depends on the wind.
There is a chance that the wind will toss the boat about quite a bit and sometimes it's difficult to reach the place where you are going.
However, the power comes from the wind, not the people sailing the boat.

The steam boat, depends neither on human strength nor the wind.
It depends on the power within, the engine.
This power within is able to move the boat to its destination in spite of the weakness of human strength and outward circumstances.

This is what James says that Jesus Christ desires of us.
He desires his followers to develop the capacity to carry a great load in life without permitting that load to depress or destroy them.
Jesus creates the load not to destroy us but rather for that load to help us move smoothly through the journey of life.

Sea faring people and sailors dread traveling on a boat with no cargo.
If this happens, the motion is rough and some are sick, however when they are loaded up with cargo they move smoothly along.
That is the work of trials in the Christian life.
They help us to get settled on the sea, even when it's rough and move slowly towards our destination of heaven.
Joseph learnt lots of lessons in prison so he might be able to handle success and God's blessing with the same maturity that he handled the hard times in prison.
We know that we are growing in Christ when we handle the difficult times as well as we handle the times of great blessing.

When we fully consecrate our lives to God and place everything in His hands we can have a perfect peace that He is in control.
Although we don't always understand at the time what God is doing in our lives, or where he is leading us, we can trust God, whatever our situation.
Joseph seemed to have strong faith to discern that God was training and preparing him for future events.
It may be that you are in a waiting period of time in your life.
You are waiting for God to do something positive in your life.
Perhaps a new job, a wife, a husband, promotion at work, financial problems.
Please make the most of your waiting time, because God is preparing you to be mature during your time of blessing.

This leads us into the main text of Chapter 41 which informs us about Pharaoh's dreams and Joseph's escape from prison.

Pharaoh had a dream and called for the magicians of Egypt and all the wise men, but none of them could interpret the dream. (v.8)
Then the chief butler suddenly remembered his time in prison with Joseph.
He told Pharaoh about Joseph who interpreted his dream and that of the chief baker.
He informed Pharaoh that both of Joseph's interpretations came true.
Joseph was called out of prison by Pharaoh.
In v. 16 the first thing that Joseph said to Pharaoh was that it was God who interpreted the dreams.
He had faith in God and told Pharaoh that God would give Pharaoh an answer.
This was an amazing step of faith for Joseph.
It was one thing for Joseph to witness about God to two prisoners about their dreams, but it was a bigger risk to witness to someone who had great authority in the land of Egypt.

After Joseph witnessed to Pharaoh about the greatness of the Hebrew God, he proceeded to explain Pharaoh's dreams.

Basically Joseph told Pharaoh that he was going to have 7 good years with an abundant supply of grain and food, and then this would be followed by a time of 7 years of famine.

Then in v. 33-36 Joseph proceeded to give Pharaoh some advice.

He told Pharaoh to appoint a discerning and wise man to look after all this surplus of food.

He told Pharaoh to store up grain in the years of plenty so they would have food during the years of famine.

You might have expected Pharaoh to say to Joseph,

"thank you very much for interpreting my dreams and giving me some advice, you can go back to prison and I will make sure that you get good food and that you get out of prison soon".

Under normal circumstances, I expect that Pharaoh would have said that.

However, this situation was different, because God was in complete control of everything.

God was working His purposes out, in and through these two people.

God was in control of Joseph and Pharaoh, the King of Egypt.

Pharaoh decided that Joseph was the best person to control Egypt for the next 14 years.

This was an amazing decision on the part of Pharaoh to take a Hebrew slave out of prison and appoint him as the second in command of the whole of Egypt.

In v. 45-52 we are told that in addition to the best job in Egypt, Pharaoh gave Joseph a wife, and he had two children.

The first born was called "Manasseh" and the second born was called "Ephraim".

The two names of his children were significant. They are interpreted in the text for us.

The Hebrew word "Manasseh" literally means "making me forget".

And the name "Ephraim" literally means "fruitfulness".

Through the names of his children, Joseph witnessed to the goodness of God.

In verses 47-57 we are told that the interpretation of Pharaoh's dream by Joseph was 100% accurate.

It happened just as Joseph told Pharaoh.

There were 7 years of abundant food.

Then in v.54-57 we are told about the beginning of the famine time.

All of the countries of the known world were in famine and they could only buy grain from Joseph in Egypt.

Joseph not only had power in Egypt, but he also had power over the known world at that time.

There are a number of spiritual observations and practical applications that I would like to draw out of this chapter.

1. It is only the God of the Bible who can do such amazing things as He did in the life of Joseph, therefore we can trust Him with our lives.

The Bible teaches that God is all powerful, all knowing, and present everywhere, therefore he can direct His plans through whom He wishes.

This must give Christians great confidence to trust God in all of our situations.

God knows what He is doing in every situation of our lives.

Peace only comes when we accept God's sovereign will in our lives.

There is a poem I was given by a lady in my Church in England which I would like to read to you.

It was given to me at a time when I was finding it difficult to accept what God was allowing to happen in my life.

It may help you now or in the future, please keep a copy in your Bible.

It is written in an old English style. I hope that it translates into Japanese O.K.

In acceptance lieth peace

O' my heart be still

Let thy restless worries cease

And accept His will
Though this test be not thy choice
It is His, therefore rejoice

In His plan there cannot be
Ought to make thee sad
If it is His choice for thee
Take it and be glad
Make from it some lovely thing
To the glory of thy King

Cease from sighs and murmurings
Sing His loving Grace
This thing means thy furthering
To a wealthy place
From thy fears, He'll give release
In acceptance lieth peace.

By: Hannah Hurnard

2. Joseph was determined to put God's word above the wisdom of the world.

People today do not want to acknowledge the wisdom of God's word.
Most people would prefer to go their own way, and make their own decisions without the God of the Bible to help them.
Over the last 2,000 years, man's wisdom has never amounted to very much and in many cases has been very wrong.
The book of Job reveals to us many things that scientists over the years have never understood correctly.

I just want to mention one.

I want you to note that the book of Job was written about 2,500 BC.

In the 16th and 17th century science was developing and people began to make telescopes to look into space. Lots of ideas and theories were proposed about our world.

However, in 1946, we received the first moving pictures of our world from space.

All of a sudden it was proved scientifically that the world "hangs on nothing".

The amazing thing is that 4,446 years before this, God told Job exactly about the mystery of our world.

It is written in Job Chapter 26: v. 7 that the earth hangs on nothing.

The wisdom of the world was incorrect until science had to admit finally, that God's word in Job was true.

(There are many other discoveries in the book of Job that scientists have had to admit eventually that God's word is correct)

Sadly, in some Churches today people look for human wisdom to solve their problems, rather than look into and obey God's word.

All the wisdom that we will ever need is contained in God's word.

Let me give you an example from the medical profession.

Some medical students were attending a seminar on abortion.

The lecturer confronted them with a case study.

He said, the father of the family has syphilis (sexually transmitted disease) and the mother has T.B.

They have had four children already. The first child is blind, the second child died, the third child is deaf and dumb, and the fourth child has T.B.

The mother is now pregnant with her fifth child.

She is willing to have an abortion.

Then the professor asked, "What would your advice be to that woman?"

Every student voted to advise the woman to terminate the pregnancy.

The professor replied "Congratulations, you have just murdered Beethoven."

If one of these students had been a medical doctor to Beethoven's mother, then the world would have lost a great music composer.

The medical students only had to read the 10 commandments in the Bible and they would have known that it is never right to terminate life.

It is never right to take the wisdom of this world if it goes against the wisdom of God's word.

It doesn't matter what the subject matter is, God's words always gives wisdom.

3. When Joseph fed the world he was a fore -shadow of Jesus Christ.

v. 55 - of chapter 41.

⁵⁵ So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do."

Does this sound familiar?

Let us read John 2: v.5

⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do *it*."

At the wedding in Cana of Galilee, Jesus's mother, Mary trusted Jesus to deal with the problem and the people had the best wine.

Going to Joseph was the answer to the famine in Egypt and going to Jesus was the answer to the lack of wine at the wedding.

Going to Jesus is the answer to the spiritual famine that sin brings upon us.

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life, he who comes to me will never go hungry". (John 6:35)

Jesus also said, "if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink".

(John 7:37)

Joseph was a real character in history who was able to feed the world physically.

Jesus is also real and is able to help us all spiritually if we are prepared to come to Him and trust in His word and His wisdom.

May God help us all as we depend upon Him to honour His word as we obey it in our lives.