

I Had A Dream

The Rise of Joseph, the Type of Christ

- ¹ After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile,
² and behold, there came up out of the Nile seven cows attractive and plump, and they fed in the reed grass.
³ And behold, seven other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of the Nile after them, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile.
⁴ And the ugly, thin cows ate up the seven attractive, plump cows. And Pharaoh awoke.
⁵ And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time. And behold, seven ears of grain, plump and good, were growing on one stalk.
⁶ And behold, after them sprouted seven ears, thin and blighted by the east wind.
⁷ And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump, full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream.
- ⁸ So in the morning his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was none who could interpret them to Pharaoh.
⁹ Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "I remember my offenses today.
¹⁰ When Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me and the chief baker in custody in the house of the captain of the guard,
¹¹ we dreamed on the same night, he and I, each having a dream with its own interpretation.
¹² A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each man according to his dream.
¹³ And as he interpreted to us, so it came about. I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged."
- ¹⁴ Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they quickly brought him out of the pit. And when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh.
¹⁵ And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it."
¹⁶ Joseph answered Pharaoh, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer."
¹⁷ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Behold, in my dream I was standing on the banks of the Nile.
¹⁸ Seven cows, plump and attractive, came up out of the Nile and fed in the reed grass.
¹⁹ Seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and thin, such as I had never seen in all the land of Egypt.
²⁰ And the thin, ugly cows ate up the first seven plump cows,
²¹ but when they had eaten them no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they were still as ugly as at the beginning. Then I awoke.
²² I also saw in my dream seven ears growing on one stalk, full and good.
²³ Seven ears, withered, thin, and blighted by the east wind, sprouted after them,
²⁴ and the thin ears swallowed up the seven good ears. And I told it 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 revealed 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.

27 The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty ears blighted by the east wind are also seven years of famine.

28 It is as I told Pharaoh; God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do.

29 There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt,

30 but after them there will arise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt. The famine will consume the land,

31 and the plenty will be unknown in the land by reason of the famine that will follow, for it will be very severe.

32 And the doubling of Pharaoh's dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about.

33 Now therefore let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt.

34 Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land and take one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven plentiful years.

35 And let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it.

36 That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are to occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish through the famine."

37 This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants.

38 And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?"

39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are.

40 You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards 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 from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck.

43 And he made him ride in his second chariot. And they called out before him, "Bow the knee!" Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt.

44 Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."

45 And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenath-paneah. And he gave him in marriage Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On. So Joseph went out over the land of Egypt.

46 Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of 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 plentiful years the earth produced abundantly,

48 and he gathered up all the food of these seven years, which occurred in the land of Egypt, and put the food in the cities. He put in every city the food from the fields around it.

49 And Joseph stored up grain in great abundance, like the sand of the sea, until he ceased to measure it, for it could not be measured.

50 Before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph. Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, bore them to him.

51 Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh. "For," he said, "God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house."

52 The name of the second he called Ephraim, "For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."

53 The seven years of plenty that occurred in the land of Egypt came to an end,

54 and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. There was famine in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

- ⁵⁵ When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph. What he says to you, do."
- ⁵⁶ So when the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt.
- ⁵⁷ Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth.

Genesis 41:1-57

Dying, Rising, Serving

If there is one thing I've learned from the Bible, it is that God's gracious work in a person's life always follows the same basic pattern. First, a person must **die**. Then, they must be **raised** to newness of life. Then, they must be **set apart** as holy. Once this happens, they begin to serve God, the King of the Universe, with new hearts, minds, and affections.

The thing is, it is absolutely necessary for this pattern to be followed. It is impossible to have a different order, because all human beings, from Adam to you, are in the same basic condition. All of us are **born dead** in our sins. "**And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience**" (Eph 2:1-2). Do you think there is anyone except Christ who can say, "**This wasn't true of me?**" If there were, they that person wouldn't need salvation, wouldn't need a Savior, and would be a perfect man. Not "basically good," but perfect, as God is perfect.

The NT depicts these things, first, through the life of Christ. Not that he needed it for himself mind you, but that he underwent it for our sake, according to law, so that he could be proven the Only Faithful Man, obedient in all things and without sin. First, he is **baptized** (thus picturing death and resurrection). This takes place when he is **30 years** of age (Luke 3:23) in order that he might be legally ordained into his **prophetic** (Ezek 1:1), **kingly** (2 Sam 5:4), and **priestly** service (Num 4:3, 47) that he will begin as he walks into the desert to be tempted.¹

At his baptism, the **Holy Spirit** descends upon him, filling him, anointing

¹ Darrell Bock comments on the meaning of age thirty in the OT. "The age of thirty has been taken as symbolic of the appropriate age for the **beginning of service**, since many OT offices could be filled at that Age. Among the OT references to thirty are the age for the priesthood (Nu. 4:3), the age of Joseph on entry into Pharaoh's service (Gen. 41:46), the age of Ezekiel when called to ministry (perhaps Ezek. 1:1), and most importantly, the age of David when he started reigning (2 Sam. 5:4). However, the number should not be taken as merely symbolic or theological, since Luke gives only and approximate number... The age of thirty connects Jesus with OT notables" (Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, Vol. 1, BECNT (Grand Rapids: MI: Baker Books, 1994), 351-352. J.C. Ryle rightly notes, "This was the age, it will be recalled, when the Levites were first allowed to work in the tabernacle (Numbers 4:3)." Ryle, *Luke*, CCC, Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), 54. See also Dionysius, Rom. Ant. 4:6.

him, and **clothing** him with power (**Acts 10:37-38**). So great was this anointing and power that he became, as it were, the very **signet ring** of the King, his Father in heaven. Everything he thought had the King's stamp of approval. Everything he said was a message from God. Everything he did had the authority of heaven itself. This is as it was predicted by Haggai, "On that day, declares the LORD of hosts, I will take you ... my servant ... and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the LORD of hosts" (**Hag 2:23**).

He would teach them. He would heal them. He would **feed** them. So persuasive and authoritative, so comforting and freeing, so loving and kind was he that crowds flocked to him. They were hungry for what he had to give, so much so that the Pharisees, his chief antagonists **would say**, "You see that you are **gaining nothing**. Look, **the world has gone after him**" (**John 12:19**).

For just over **three** years he did these things, until it reached a crescendo on that glorious Palm Sunday when he entered the Holy City **riding** as a king of old (**2 Sam 15:30; 16:1-2; 1 Kgs 1:38**). But it all came to a tragic and terrible end, as later that week, he was betrayed, handed over, and crucified. On that hill in Jerusalem, the Lord Jesus died and was buried. But **three** days later, he **rose** from the pit.

<p>Order for Christ 1: death, resurrection, set apart--symbolized and legalized in baptism Order for Christ 2: literal death (a second baptism), resurrection, ascension</p>
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After ascending, these same things are depicted as taking place in God's people. At Pentecost, the **Holy Spirit** descends upon them (**Acts 2:4**). Peter preaches a Christ-centered sermon and commands the people to repent and be **baptized** (**Acts 2:38**). This baptism depicts the **death** and **resurrection** that Christ underwent, as well as that they must undergo in order to be united to him in mystical union (**Rom 6:3-4**). It also symbolizes the **clothing** of the Holy Spirit (**2 Cor 5:4**) and with Christ himself (**Gal 3:27**). This is the clothing we need, the initiation we need to begin **serving** Christ in our bodies (**Rom 12:1-2**) as a priesthood of believers (**1 Pet 2:5**).

<p>Order for Us: Dead. Raised through faith. Set apart through baptism</p>

This is all well known, though many have not put the puzzle together in quite this way. Still, the basic pieces are there. But **do you think it was different in the OT?** Sure, some pieces here or there may have been darker, harder to see. But in the life of one man, the man Joseph, we see a picture that describes for us both the necessity for our own **order of salvation** like this (as well as his), and for the need for a **coming Redeemer** who would do these things for us.

Pharaoh's Dreams and Their Interpretation

Genesis 41 describes a remarkable story of Joseph in the court of the king: **Pharaoh**—the mightiest man on the face of the earth. But how did Joseph get there? Last we saw, he was left alone in prison because the cupbearer forgot all about him. It all began with a **dream**. Well, two actually, and neither one was his. Our story introduces us to the **third pair** of dreams in the Joseph Cycle (**37:5–11**; **40:5–19**; **41:1-7**). This last pair of dreams belong to Pharaoh.

Joseph explains exactly what this pairing of dreams means in **vs. 32**, “**The doubling of Pharaoh's dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about.**” Therefore, God’s sovereignty and power are going to be displayed in our story in a remarkable way, beginning with these dreams of Pharaoh and moving on right through the end of the book. We saw this same sovereign power with the cupbearer and baker, and now it causes us to wonder about Joseph’s dreams too, because his have yet to come to pass. But first, we must think about the Pharaoh’s dreams in this chapter.

The **first scene** of the story (**Gen 41:1-7**) takes place at night, **two whole years** after the cupbearer was released from prison. This date may be significant, as it brings us to another of Pharaoh’s birthdays. Pharaoh is sleeping. And behold, like a modern day King (i.e. Martin Luther King): **he has a dream**. What he dreams are things that we know from ancient Egypt would have meant something to the king, especially dreams where the he was present. Dreams were, “**One of the earliest mediums through which the Egyptians received communications from the gods ... Kings often received commands from a deity through dreams ... [they] were an important source for knowing the divine will.**”² If the dreamer sees himself doing something, the dream can predict the future, give warning, be allegorical, and similars are often found either in sound (puns) or situations.³ A lot of that takes place in our story here.

Pharaoh dreams that **he** is **standing by the Nile** (**Gen 41:1**). So he is in his own dream. The Nile is the source of all Egypt’s wealth and prosperity. It also flowed from the god **Hapi’s home**; Hapi was the god associated with the Nile. Never forget that these ancient people were not naturalistic materialists like most Americans are. It is important to the story, for it is what makes Pharaoh seek an interpretation.

As he looked upon the mighty Nile, **seven cows** arose from its murky depths (**2**). Note **the number “seven.”** Numbers are important in every dream in the Joseph story. They always stand for something. These cows were “**attractive and plump**”

² John D. Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1997), 224-35.

³ Ibid., 226; John H Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 130.

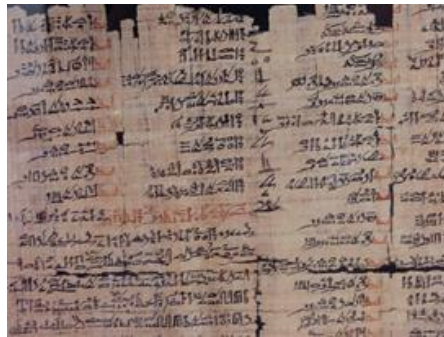
or “sleek and fat” (NAS) or “handsome and sturdy” (TNK) or “fair in appearance and choice of flesh” (LXX). You get the point. This is the kind of cow you get when you go to Ruth’s Chris Steakhouse, except that cow is now on your plate. This isn’t your local Denny’s beef. The cows ate well, from the rich reed grass on the shore of the rivers bank. But then, seven other cows, “ugly and thin” (3) or “miserable-looking and lean” (CJB) or “evil in appearance” (OKE) and “gaunt” (NAS) came out of the water after them. They stood by the first seven cows on the bank of the river. Then, disturbingly, the seven evil (*ra*) cows ate the seven attractive and plump cows (4). As Pharaoh awoke, I’m sure he said to himself, “Holy Cow!”



The Pharaoh fell asleep again and dreamed a second dream (5). This time, seven ears of grain, “plump and good” or “full [and] ripe” (CJB) or “solid and healthy” (TNK) were growing on one stalk. Knowing the narcissism of world leaders, it is probable that he thought he was now entering a Wheaties commercial and he was going to be on the box. But suddenly, up came seven ears, “thin and blighted” or “scrawny and scorched” (CEB) by the “east wind” (6). As we have seen throughout Genesis, east is never a good direction. In this case, it brings the hot desert winds of the Sinai to burn the wheat. And thus, “The thin ears swallowed up the seven plump, full ears” (7). Again Pharaoh awoke, but it was just a dream.



Now the second (41:8-13) scene begins. Obviously, the pair of dreams have similar, repeating themes. As with Joseph and the officers of Pharaoh, this doubling had to mean something. Was the Hapi speaking to him? If so, what? So, “In the morning his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men” (8). These are “Diviner-priests” (*hrtm*), a whole class of men trained and studied in arcane arts.⁴ They lived in a place called the “House of Life,” where dream interpretation manuals were stored and studied.⁵ This was their job.



Egyptian dream book
Lenka Peacock, courtesy of the British Museum

Since this is what these men did for a living, “Pharaoh told them his dreams” (8). Yet, rather astonishingly, “There was none who could interpret them to Pharaoh.” This does three things. **First**, it shows that Hapi isn’t exactly, well, happy to reveal anything to his own priests. Perhaps he doesn’t know the meaning himself? **Second**, it demonstrates that at this still rather early period in Egypt’s known history, the priestly class had ethical integrity, more than we read about later priests in Babylon and even Israel having, when they would just tell the king anything he wanted to hear. I find it remarkable that they would actually tell Pharaoh they don’t know what it means. Who does that?

Finally, it sets us up for the rest of the story. It seems probable to me that God, Joseph’s God, the Creator God, our God prevented these men from being able to see the interpretation. Why? The story says, “Then the chief cupbearer [who was obviously privy to this whole conversation] said to Pharaoh, ‘I remember my offenses today. When Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me and the chief baker in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, we dreamed on the same night, he and I, each having a dream with its own interpretation. A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he

⁴ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, vol. 2, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 391.

⁵ Walton, *Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament)*, 130.

interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each man according to his dream. And as he interpreted to us, so it came about. I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged” (9-13). The cupbearer who was so graciously restored by the Pharaoh had forgotten all about the man who had given him the good news. Now, his conscience awakens and he is grieved over his forgetfulness. But you should be able to see that this is all part of God’s timing. Now he remembers, and it is for a reason.

The Pharaoh trusts the cupbearer, and sends for Joseph, who is quickly brought “out of the pit” (Gen 41:14). This is the second time he has been taken out of a pit. The first resulted in his thirteen year enslavement. What will this one bring? It is going to bring him a kind of spiritualized resurrection. Of course, Joseph has been saved for many years now. But this is the moment when he is figuratively raised to live for service to the king. It is a picture of your own life in Christ. Frankly, in some astonishing ways, this whole scene is a picture of baptism.

The third scene of the story (41:14-46) begins with coming out of the pit and then with Joseph being shaved and getting a change of clothes before being brought to Pharaoh (14).⁶ This shows us three things. On the most mundane level, this simply shows us that Joseph was a filthy mess. Of course, he has been in this pit for several years now. Second, he is approaching the king. One does not just walk into the chamber of a king looking like Pig-Pen. Third, and you may disagree with me on this, but hear me out, this should be read in light of redemptive history and how this entire story becomes a type of Christ and a type of the Christian life.

Joseph Set Apart in a Ritual Purification

In this third sense, consider the Law (as we have seen many times, Jews would have naturally read Genesis in light of the Torah that they had, and this was deliberate, as Genesis is part of Five Books, not just a standalone book by itself). There are laws about shaving, and they are associated with ritual cleanness and

⁶ **Going Deeper:** The ESV has “shaved himself.” The LXX Brenton has “... and shaved him.” Young’s Literal has “... and he shaveth.” The old Coverdale Bible has, “let himself be shauen.” The Latin and English translations of it (Wycliffe and Douay Rheims) have “they shaved him.” The verb (*galach*) is a third person piel imperfect which leaves the English open to these various possibilities. My own sense is that he no more prepared himself than did Esther when she was brought before the king (Est 2:12-13). This is more probable because Joseph’s face was shaved. This was not the custom of Semitic peoples, but it was of Egyptians. They were clean shaven, and so it seems like Joseph is being presented before the King in a way that would not offend Pharaoh or make him think less of him. The LXX and VUL both take it in this sense. Thus, as Driver says, “The Egyptians shaved both their heads and their faces (though they wore on important occasions artificial hair and beards): on the monuments, only foreigners, and natives of inferior rank, are represented as growing beards.” If the translator chooses “cut the hair,” it may be necessary to say “they cut his hair.” In William David Reayburn and Euan McG. Fry, *A Handbook on Genesis*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1998), 923.

purification. It is not merely physical, either in the Law or in an Egyptian court. That isn't the way they thought or operated. "He who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes and shave off all his hair and bathe himself in water, and he shall be clean" (Lev 14:8). "Thus you shall do to them to cleanse them: sprinkle the water of purification upon them, and let them go with a razor over all their body, and wash their clothes and cleanse themselves" (Num 8:7). In these two cases, we have ritual baptisms going on (one immersion, one sprinkling).

After this, Joseph is clothed. Consider the ordination of the priests. "You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting and wash them with water. Then you shall take the garments, and put on Aaron" (Ex 29:4-5). Consider Esther, "On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace" (Est 5:1) or Jehoiachin who "put off his prison garments. And every day of his life he dined regularly at the king's table" (2 Kgs 25:29). The clothing is part of being set apart for royal service after the ritual washing, and you can bet your bottom dollar that it was viewed quite spiritually by these people, for the king was himself considered a god.

I'm suggesting that what is happening to Joseph is similar to what happens in Christian baptism where we are "baptized into Christ and clothed with Christ" (Gal 3:27),⁷ where we "put off" the old self and "put on" the new self (Col 3:9-10). Joseph may or may not have been ritually washed. I understand the text doesn't say it in so many words. Yet importantly, Egyptians knew about baptism.⁸ The Rabbis even said things like, "And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river (Ex 2:5). R. Johanan said in the name of R. Simeon b. Yohai: It teaches that she went down there to cleanse herself of her father's idols;⁹ and thus it says: When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion (Isa 4:4) etc." (Sotah 12:b). I think he was, and we will see more signs connecting this more specifically to baptism as we go along. But even if he wasn't, the overall picture is the same: Death (prison), resurrection (out of the pit), service (beginning with the shaving/clothing).

⁷ **Going Deeper:** In a figurative way, this is actually Joseph's second baptism. In the first, he was thrown into the pit and his clothes (coat of many colors) was "dipped" (*tabal*) in blood. This baptism parallels Christ's second baptism (Mark 10:38-39; Luke 12:50) on the cross. The language also reminds us of Revelation 19:13, "He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God."

⁸ "When an Egyptian or a foreigner is dragged into the water by a crocodile and killed, or destroyed by the water itself [he is immersed], and it is known, then the inhabitants of the city where he comes to shore have the solemn obligation of embalming him, of arraying him in the most gorgeous robes and of placing him in a sacred sarcophagus. No one may touch him, whether relatives or friends, apart from the priests of the Nile, who must tend him with their own hands and treat him as one who is more than an ordinary being" (Herodotus Book II. 90).

⁹ The note in the Talmud here reads, "Since immersion is part of the ceremony of conversion, it is assumed that she became a proselyte."

This is a deliberate, repeating pattern in the Scriptures.

Before we see these things, we come to Joseph [interpreting the dream](#). First, Pharaoh calls Joseph and says, “[I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it](#)” ([Gen 41:15](#)). Joseph’s answer is classic, “[It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer](#)” ([16](#)). Joseph uses the common word for God here: [Elohim](#). But which God? Hapi? Set? Horus? Osiris? Isis? No, [Joseph’s God, the God of gods](#).

After Pharaoh recounts his dreams ([18-24](#)), and Joseph tells him that [God has revealed what he is about to do](#) ([25](#)), putting Pharaoh in his place, Joseph interprets them. And this is their meaning, “[The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one](#)” ([26](#)). As with the cupbearer and baker, the [number](#) of things in the dream equals an [equivalent period of time](#). Seven, of course, brings us back to creation in Genesis 1. As with the cupbearer and baker, the dreams are interpreted together.

“[The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty ears blighted by the east wind are also seven years of famine](#)” ([27](#)). As was common throughout ANE dream stories, these dreams predict the future. It is what [God is about to do](#) ([28](#)). Thankfully, God has provided a way where the famine might not kill everyone. He has revealed it to Joseph through Pharaoh’s dream and it now serves as [a warning](#) if they will heed it. “[There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt](#)” ([29](#)). “[But after them there will arise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt](#)” ([30](#)), reminding us of the cupbearer who had forgotten Joseph. “[The famine will consume the land, and the plenty will be unknown in the land by reason of the famine that will follow, for it will be very severe](#)” ([30-31](#)).

Importantly, Joseph adds this addendum, just in case. “[The doubling of Pharaoh’s dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about](#)” ([31](#)). At the end of the day, this is a story about God—his will, his determination, his providence, his sovereignty. Pharaoh, for all this greatness, is nothing compared to God. Would that leaders today would realize once more that they are not gods, but that “[The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will](#)” ([Pro 21:1](#)). And would to God that they would once more learn to fear God, even as, astonishingly, we will see Pharaoh do. Those are the only kind of leaders fit to rule or govern anyone.

Pharaoh? Fearing God? Yes. We saw it back with Abraham and Sarah ([Gen 12:17-20](#)) with a previous Pharaoh. Now this Pharaoh will do the same thing. God will not harden his heart like he will later harden another Pharaoh’s heart in the

Exodus. Joseph gives sage advice, “Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land and take one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven plentiful years” (34). The advice might be sage, but imagine how the Egyptians would have grumbled at having 1/5 of all their food taken by the government. Imagine how tyrannical that would have seemed. This would **not be easy advice** for a king to follow.

Nor would the next advice, “And let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it. That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are to occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish through the famine” (35-36). Imagine how crazy that would have all seemed. Of course, that may be putting ourselves into their shoes. These were profoundly religious people who truly believed in such things, so it might not have been that difficult of a sell. But then again, you take something away from someone and even the most religious among them will soon begin to complain.

Yet, the seriousness of the interpretation, combined with the words of the cupbearer had the most remarkable effect upon these pagan leaders. “This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants” (37). This is truly incredible, not only that they listened to him, but also how Joseph had acted. Notice how Joseph has said **nothing about himself**, nor does he seem concerned with anything but Egypt. This is not a plot to give himself power. Nothing like that is in his mind. But he is concerned about the Egyptians, even after all they have done to him. How incredible. This selfless **love for his enemies** is at the heart of what it means to be a servant, and that is exactly what Joseph has become now, not through the force of a whip or threat of punishment, but through the power of God.

Joseph and More Types of Christ

The Holy Spirit

It is at this point that **several more remarkable parallels with Christ** present themselves to anyone with eyes that can see. They are straightforward and plain, not wrapped in riddles. And Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?” (38). We have seen only a little of **the Holy Spirit** in Genesis (**Gen 1:2**), but I have mentioned his importance today at Pentecost, and I should also add now, **at Christ’s baptism**. He came as a dove upon the Lord in the waters. He is the one who **sets both him and us apart** as holy for service to the Great King. He is the one who **empowers** in the OT his prophets, priests, and kings to lead and direct his people. Joseph has already shown signs of a prophet, thus attaching the Spirit of Prophecy (**Rev 19:10**) to the mind of Pharaoh. Soon, he will

act like a king and a priest.

Like the Son of the King

But Pharaoh's question is actually rhetorical. He knows that no one in all of Egypt has such power as this. "And Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are' (I find it noteworthy to mention again that Pharaoh believed him!) "You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you" (39-40). In these words, the king essentially makes Joseph his son, Hence Joseph, like the famous Disney title for Moses later on, becomes **Prince of Egypt**.

As Prince of the King, Joseph becomes more like Christ than ever. "Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt'" (41). God the Father will later tell his Son, "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill" (Ps 2:6). "Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand" (42). Through Zerubbabel Haggai says of Messiah, "On that day, declares the LORD of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the LORD, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the LORD of hosts" (Hag 2:23).¹⁰ Joseph receives more **new clothes** (42; one of the most important images in the whole Joseph Cycle—Gen 37:3, 23; 39:12; 41:14). He receives a gold chain (42). Then, like David, Solomon, and Christ who ride into Jerusalem as kings (see above), Pharaoh "Made him ride in his second chariot. And they called out before him, 'Bow the knee!' Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt" (43). Of course, at the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow (Php 2:10).

It continues. The king said, "I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt" (44). Then, like Daniel going into the royal court, Joseph receives a **new name**, "Zaphenath-paneah" (45). I am not making it up, though you might accuse me of it when you hear me tell you this name can mean any of the following: "Savior of the age; Savior of the world; giver of the nourishment of life; prince of the life of the age; revealer of a secret. The concealed treasure. Treasury of the glorious rest."¹¹ Finally, just as the Father gives

¹⁰ Two verses earlier (Hag 2:21) are echoed in Matthew 23:29 and Luke 21:26. "Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth" becomes, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken."

¹¹ Stelman Smith and Judson Cornwall, *The Exhaustive Dictionary of Bible Names* (North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos, 1998), 247. The name is a Syrio-Palestinian name, not Egyptian. No one knows exactly what it means. More scholarly sources than this basic name dictionary have things like, "God speaks and he lives," or, "The god has said: he will live," or "the man who knows things," or "the sustainer of life," or "sustenance of the land is the living."

the son a bride, so also Pharaoh gives Joseph the most beautiful woman in all the world in marriage (if you ask the author of *Joseph and Aseneth*). She is “Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On” (45). Now the triad is complete: prophet, king, priest.

Intercessor for the People

In verse 36 we read, “Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt.” Given that we have seen Joseph act as a prophet and as a king, it is not a coincidence that both Ezekiel (Ezek 1:1) and David (2 Sam 5:4) entered their service at this age. Nor is it a coincidence that the priest did (Num 4:3), nor that Christ did (Luke 3:23).

The fourth section (Gen 41:47-52) of the story now begins. The purpose of telling us his age is filled out in the final section of the passage. After Joseph leaves the presence of Pharaoh (46), we learn about the seven years of plenty (47). During this time Joseph, “Gathered up all the food of these seven years, which occurred in the land of Egypt, and put the food in the cities. He put in every city the food from the fields around it” (48). There was no hiding it, no government confiscation, no federalized single place for the food to go. The people knew *what* he was doing, even if they weren’t sure if he *should* be doing it.

“And Joseph stored up grain in great abundance, like the sand of the sea, until he ceased to measure it, for it could not be measured” (49). This verse proves that the first part of Pharaoh’s dreams did come true. There was so much plenty, who could have believed what would come immediately afterward? Do people living in great wealth and luxury really ever believe that it could come to a sudden screeching halt? Yet, God is sovereign here, so you can bet he will be for the next seven years as well. And Joseph believed God.

One parenthetical note is mentioned here. During these rich and bountiful years, “two sons were born to Joseph. Asenath ... bore them to him. Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh, because in these few short year, God had caused him to forget all his hardship and all his father’s house” (51). Don’t move too quickly past this verse, for it reveals a great deal about the hurt Joseph felt so deeply over his life. You think Joseph was above the thoughts that would come in to your mind if you were incessantly mocked by your brothers, sold for dead by them, turned into a slave, sent to prison for a crime you never committed, and left there to rot by a man who was supposed to show you favor? No. These things were profoundly grievous to him. For most people, they would be the cause of hating God for eternity. But not for Joseph. Through his suffering, he believed in God. In his suffering, he had faith. That is what faith is about, trusting God when your own

circumstances say you have no reason to. But you have his word, and his word gives you certain promises, even that we are reading today, and they have all the reason in the world behind them. That is what Joseph leaned on in those years. Now, he is thankful that those times are over, and every time he says his son's name, he will be reminded both of the past and God's faithfulness to him. For God has acted on his behalf.

The other son is named **Ephraim**, “**For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction**” (52). The boy's name reflects the years of plenty, such that Egypt's plenty is paralleled in Joseph's plenty. Not all of Joseph's life was suffering. God brought good times too, and in them, he rejoices and gives thanks. Unlike the cupbearer, he remembers God in the good time. That is also what faith does. It never takes for granted any of the blessings of God.

Well, the final act concludes (41:53-57) with the seven years of plenty coming to an end (53). Then begin the seven years of famine (54). This famine was in “**all lands.**” This presents it as it would appear to an ancient person—the whole known world. You could not go anywhere or find a person from any place that was immune to this famine. “**But in all the land of Egypt there was bread**” (54).

The ending here is perhaps the most beautiful part of the story. For in it, not only do we see the wisdom of God on display, the faithfulness of Joseph on display, but also **Christ is greatly on display**. “**When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, ‘Go to Joseph. What he says to you, do’**” (Gen 41:55). With only a change from bread to wine, Mary says the same thing of Jesus. In Jesus' first miracle, he turned water into wine. Mary said, “**Do whatever he tells you**” (John 2:5).¹² Why? Because Jesus is the great intercessor between God and the people, **here to serve**.

So when the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt” (56). No free handouts here. Commerce continued, as it must for a society to survive. But neither was Joseph extracting from the people beyond their means. But the greater point here is the last verse, “**Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth**” (57).

The intercession of Joseph brought about **the salvation of the world**. How? Marvelously, by providing them with bread **in the eighth year**. Seven good years are gone. The first bad year is here. In this, Joseph is so very much like the Lord Jesus. Isaiah said, “**Thus says the LORD: ‘In a time of favor I have answered you; in**

¹² David A. Jones, *Old Testament Quotations and Allusions in the New Testament* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), Ge 41:55–Jn 2:5 makes this connection.

a day of salvation I have helped you; I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages, saying to the prisoners, 'Come out,' to those who are in darkness, 'Appear.' They shall feed along the ways; on all bare heights shall be their pasture; they shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them, for he who has pity on them will lead them” (Isa 49:8-10). Later he says, “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Isa 55:1).

While feeding the masses, Jesus said he is the bread of heaven, whoever comes to me shall not hunger (John 6:35). “On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink’” (John 7:37). Joseph began distributing this food in the eighth year, the first after the cycle of “seven.” The year of new creation. The year of resurrection. Given all these things, beloved, is there any wonder that the Pharisees said, “Look, the world has gone after him” (John 12:19)? He is the fulfillment of all the Scriptures, even this story of Joseph.

Joseph shows you God’s son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Listen to him. And to those who trust in him by faith alone, he raises them up from the dead, giving them newness of life, filling them with his Holy Spirit without measure (John 3:34), bringing them into a kingdom of priests where they can serve the King, bringing gladness and joy to their hearts forever.