

# Prison to Palace

GENESIS 40-41

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# Gen 39 Recap

- \* First — my thanks to Doug for last week ...
- \* I wanted to start today with a recap of the structure of the temptation in vv. 7-18 ...
- \* Which, in some ways, is “akin” to Christ’s temptation in the wilderness
- \* What I want to highlight is the three-part temptation and response cycle — and what we can learn about dealing with temptation from it

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## Gen 39 Recap

- \* At the outset, we note the timing of the temptation — **What is interesting about it?**
  - ◆ It comes when Joseph is “riding high”
- \* **Why do you think so?**
  - ◆ As reminder not to become proud, complacent, or entitled if God should choose to prosper us — and to remember the source of our prosperity!

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## Gen 39 Recap

- \* Instead, it seems Joseph’s advancement has not **corrupted** him ...
- \* Nor, as the continuing narrative will reveal, has it **tempted** him ...
  - ◆ In contrast to Adam and Eve who **coveted** the ONE THING not given to them ...
  - ◆ Joseph will prove to be steadfast in **rejecting** the ONE THING not given over to his control

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## Gen 39 Recap

- \* Additionally — while I labelled this section “the temptation of Joseph” ...
- \* It should be acknowledged this could equally be titled “the testing of Joseph” ...
- \* Bringing to mind God’s hand in the maturing of Joseph’s faith and His “positioning the chess pieces” for Joseph’s future ascendance

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## Gen 39 Recap

- \* Now — on to the 3-part cycle
- \* Potiphar’s wife is a “temptress” par excellence
- \* Her seduction exhibits three ways that temptation confronts us — **What is her first move?**
  - ◆ A **frontal assault** — “lie with me” (v. 7)
  - ◆ No subtlety — no restraint — right to the point

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## Gen 39 Recap

### \* How does Joseph parry this thrust?

- ◆ He employs reasoning — note vv. 8-9

### \* What are his core reasons?

- ◆ It is a betrayal of trust ... an ethical argument
- ◆ It is wicked — a “great evil” ... a moral argument
- ◆ It is sin ... a “God-fearing” argument

### \* What is interesting about the last part of v. 9?

- ◆ Note who Joseph says the sin is against — God!

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## Gen 39 Recap

### \* Thus rebuffed, she moves on to part 2 — what is her mode of attack here?

- ◆ Guerrilla warfare - note v. 10
- ◆ “Let’s just snuggle” ...
- ◆ Which of course she hopes will lead to more

### \* What should we note about guerrilla warfare from v. 10?

- ◆ It is RELENTLESS! ... “day after day”

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## Gen 39 Recap

### \* How does Joseph parry this attack?

- ◆ By establishing protective boundaries - v. 10
- ◆ He assiduously ignores her (will not listen) and avoids all contact with her (nor be with her)

### \* What would be some good implications for us based on this response?

- 📖 We should make every reasonable attempt to stay out of harms way — to steer clear of temptation (Prov 5:8)
- 📖 Radical separation — Matt 5:29-30

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## Gen 39 Recap

### \* Sadly, what do we normally do?

- ◆ We flirt with the boundaries

### \* What does Potiphar's wife resort to next?

- ◆ She sets and springs an ambush - note vv. 10-11a

### \* How does Joseph defend this attack?

- ◆ FLIGHT — He ran from temptation ... radical separation!

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## Gen 39 Recap

- ◆ There are so many good NT verses to reinforce this —  
Jas 4:7; 1 Pet 5:8-10
- \* All good defenses on Joseph's part ... **but ultimately why does Joseph prevail?**
- ◆ He had a well developed doctrine of sin — He knew ...
  - ▶ Sin to be sin — not an unfortunate circumstance
  - ▶ That sin impacts others
  - ▶ That all sin is an affront to God (Ps 51:4)

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## Gen 39 Recap

- ◆ ALL of which he worked out AHEAD OF TIME, reminding us that ...
- 👉 If we fail to contemplate and understand sin ahead of time — we will fail in the “heat of the moment”
- \* In the end, Joseph regards obedience to God's principles as his highest priority ...
- \* Despite the “no-win” position this puts him in

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## Gen 39 Recap

- \* In so doing, he demonstrates the character of 1 Cor 10:31 and Col 3:23 [TURN]
- \* So while Potiphar's wife is persistent — Joseph is more-so and she meets her match
- \* But she's not done yet ...
- \* Having been spurned by Joseph — what is her next move?

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## Gen 39 Recap

- ◆ She cries wolf in vv. 13-18
- ◆ Her actions are, for me, reminiscent of the aftermath “in the garden”
- \* What sinful actions are in her accusation?
  - ◆ Blame shifting - vv. 14a, 17a
    - It's Potiphar's fault for bringing in this Hebrew slave
    - Remind you of anyone? ...

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## Gen 39 Recap

- ◆ False witness - vv. 14b, 17b
  - Against Joseph — Pre-meditated attempted rape
  - Her innocence — she claims the role of victim vs. the seductress she was
- \* All of which serves to land Joseph in prison ...
  - ◆ Thanks GOD!
- \* Yet there are some wonderful implications in this section for us — **What comes to mind?**

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## Gen 39 Recap

- 📖 FIRST and FOREMOST — We can resist sin when we employ the right defenses
- 📖 True character is revealed in crisis, and ...
- 📖 Success in times of crisis depends more on character, i.e. conformance to God's principles, than on circumstances
- 📖 An upright walk does not guarantee a stress free life
- 📖 Suffering marks us as "God's people"

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## Gen 39 Recap

- \* OK — sorry for the “long” recap ...
- \* But I was just so struck by the way the narrative brought all these things out that I wanted to augment what Doug already shared with us last week
- \* So on to chapters 40-41 — and Joseph’s journey from “prison to palace”

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## Opening Thoughts

- \* All of Gen 39 and 40 serve to develop and refine Joseph’s faith
- \* Note his progression ...
  - ◆ From favored by father to sold by siblings
  - ◆ From servant to Potiphar to shackled in prison
  - ◆ From fetters to forgotten
- \* Yet Joseph never complains, nor lose faith — nor does he ever stop exercising his God-given gifts

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# Opening Thoughts

\* What NT verses might Joseph have authored?

- ◆ 2 Cor 5:7 — “For we walk by faith, not by sight”
  - ◆ Heb 11:1 — “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”
- \* Dreams figure prominently in chapters 40 and 41 — though they are of a different sort than those of Abraham and Jacob, **How?**
- ◆ Abraham & Jacob’s dreams are revelation from God (Gen 15, 28), while these dreams are providentially used to advance God’s plan

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# Opening Thoughts

- \* This is an important topic which we will “set up” at the end of today’s lesson, namely ...
- ◆ How is God communicating today?
  - ◆ And — What are we to make of claims of Jesus appearing in dreams and saving people?
  - ◆ And — Are dreams a valid means for discerning God’s will for our lives?

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## Structure of Gen 40

- \* The context - vv. 1-4
- \* The problem - vv. 5-8
- \* The cupbearer's dream - vv. 9-15
- \* The baker's dream - vv. 16-19
- \* The outcome and aftermath - vv. 20-23

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## Context

- \* We leave Gen 39 with Joseph reigning over his new “household” and God, once again, “prospering” his efforts
- \* In vv. 1-2 we learn of two new arrivals to the prison — **Who are they?**
  - ◆ The cupbearer
  - ◆ The baker

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## Context

- \* These two “officials” had prominent and trusted roles in the King’s court — Why?
  - ◆ Because they prepared ... or tested ... the King’s food and drink
  - ◆ One easy way to depose a reigning monarch would be to poison him — These officials stood between this scheme and the King
- \* What was their offense against the king?

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## Context

- ◆ Text doesn’t say — Just says the King was “hoppin” mad
- \* So what does the King do?
  - ◆ Plops them in jail
- \* Which jail?
  - ◆ The very one where Joseph was incarcerated
  - ◆ Do you think that happened by chance?????
- \* What else is interesting about this jail?

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## Context

- ◆ It is overseen by the “captain of the bodyguard”
- \* Who is that?
  - ◆ None other than Potiphar - cf. 39:1
- \* We get two other “contextual setup facts” in v. 4 — What are they?
  - ◆ First — Potiphar makes the assignment of the prisoners to Joseph ... Indicating what?

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## Context

- ▶ That Joseph still has Potiphar's confidence
- ◆ Second — The following events did not happen immediately after there incarceration
  - ▶ Note the end of v. 4 — “they are in confinement for some time”
- \* So the stage is set for — “The Everly Brothers” ... Anyone know what I mean?
  - ◆ All I have to do is dream

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## The Problem

- \* In v. 5 we learn that Joseph's new charges both experienced a troubling dream
  - ◆ Each had his "own" dream and each dream had its "own" interpretation
- \* Joseph arrives, notes their "fallen faces," and inquires as to their distress
- \* What does this say about Joseph?

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## The Problem

- ◆ First — He is observant
- ◆ Second — He seems to have a genuine care for those entrusted to him ...
  - Which makes me think back to a general observation about Joseph
  - In the Gen 39 and now 40 narratives, there is no recorded resentment of Joseph's leadership among those he "reigns" over ... other than Potiphar's wife
  - Suggesting to me a [genuine benevolence](#) in his character — which will be played out later with his brothers ...

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# The Problem

» Which is pretty remarkable given all the disappointment he had suffered, reminding us ...

👉 To maintain our grace and lean on faith in the midst of suffering and disappointment

\* The problem is presented in v. 8, what is it?

- ◆ There was no one to interpret the dream
- ◆ Suggesting that the people of that time took dreams seriously — if not mystically

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# The Problem

\* What is interesting about Joseph's reply?

- ◆ First the rhetorical question — He is at once elevating “the God” and diminishing all the “dream interpreters” ... including himself!
- ◆ Second — He seems to imply that God will grant him the favor of interpretation by imploring the cupbearer and the baker to “tell him the dream”

\* Which brings us to a big question ...

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# The Problem

\* What is the point of these dreams?

- ◆ To show how God works providentially through cultural contexts, beliefs, and events to advance His sovereign will ...
- ◆ Which again opens up a practical “can of worms” that we need to carefully think through — which you will have a week to chew on!

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# The Cupbearer

\* The dream itself ...

- ◆ A healthy vine with three branches presents itself as the center-point of the dream
- ◆ In a “fast-frame” sequence of events, the vine ...
  - Buds, produces its blossoms, and then ripe grapes — right before his eyes
- ◆ Subsequently, the cupbearer finds Pharaoh’s cup in his hand — into which he squeezes the juice of the ripe grapes ...
- ◆ And presents the cup to Pharaoh

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# The Cupbearer

- \* Joseph's (God given) interpretation found significance in ...
  - ◆ The three branches — representing the timing ... three days hence
  - ◆ The presentation of the cup to Pharaoh — representing the restoration of the cupbearer to his former position in Pharaoh's court
- \* Now, what happens next (vv. 14-15)?

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# The Cupbearer

- ◆ Joseph asks the cupbearer to plead his case once he has been restored
- \* What should this reinforce about the cupbearer?
  - ◆ That he, indeed, held an influential position in the court ...
  - ◆ Else why would Joseph ask for this favor?

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# The Cupbearer

- \* What is the essential element of the case that Joseph asks the cupbearer to plead?
  - ◆ The injustices done to him ...
    - ▶ First his kidnapping — literally “I was stolen away”
    - ▶ And second — his unjust incarceration
- \* Joseph’s request raises an interesting question — Should we appeal to unbelievers to better our lot in life?

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# The Cupbearer

- \* Or just leave things to God — What do you think?
  - ◆ I’d say that we exercise every moral and ethical means available to deal with our circumstances ...
    - ▶ Remembering Prov 16:9 — “The mind of a man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.”
  - ◆ Along with — availing ourselves of prayer for God’s intervention and His will to be done!

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## The Baker

- \* Seeing the Cupbearer's favorable outcome, the Baker wants in ...
- \* And proceeds to relate his dream to Joseph
- \* The dream itself ...
  - ◆ Again the "3" motif — this time three baskets
  - ◆ The baskets contain an assortment of baked foods for Pharaoh
  - ◆ But the food for Pharaoh was being pilfered by birds

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## The Baker

- \* And then Joseph's "fateful" interpretation ...
  - ◆ Again we have a 3-day timeframe within which the outcome of the dream will be realized
  - ◆ Contrary to the Cupbearer's favorable outcome ..
  - ◆ The Baker will not profit from his release
  - ◆ He will be decapitated and his body will be hung on a tree ...
  - ◆ To be eaten by the birds

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## The Baker

- \* There is an important implication in Joseph's dream interpretations — what is it?
  - 📖 Deliver the full counsel of God's Word — which makes me think of God's charge to Ezekiel ... turn to Ezek 3:16ff
- \* Joseph was not cruel in his delivery — BUT he did not shy away from speaking what God had revealed to him

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## The Outcome & Aftermath

- \* Verses 20-22 affirm Joseph's interpretation
  - ◆ The Cupbearer was indeed restored
  - ◆ While the Baker was deposed ...
  - ◆ "... just as Joseph had interpreted to them."
- \* Things came to pass in every detail — with one exception ... **What is it?**
  - ◆ Read v. 23!!

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## The Outcome & Aftermath

- \* If you were Joseph — what would you have been thinking?
  - ◆ At a minimum — What do I have to do to catch a break, or maybe ...
  - ◆ Does God REALLY care about me?
- \* Well the text does not give us any clues as to Joseph's thoughts ... it just moves on to the next dream narrative — TWO YEARS LATER!

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## The Outcome & Aftermath

- \* What implications might we draw from this chapter?
  - 🕒 We can appeal to man, but we should not trust in man for our deliverance
  - 🕒 Disappointment ...
    - 🕒 Should prompt us to turn our affections to God & renew our faith
    - 🕒 Is often nothing more than "it's not God's timing!"
  - 🕒 Men may forget — but God does not ... Which is both a comforting and frightening thought

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# Thought Question

How should we think about dreams today?

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