

The Raising Up of Heads

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[0 : 00] If we'll return again to God's Word, we're going to sing Psalm 130.! We're from the depths, the psalmist declares, I wait, my soul waits for the Lord, my hope is in His Word.

Amen.

And give attention to my voice when I for mercy cry.

Lord, in Your presence who can stand, with you our sins record.

But yet forgiveness is with you, that we may fear you, Lord.

[1 : 50] I wait, my soul waits for the Lord.

My hope is in His Word. More than the watchman waits for dawn, my soul waits for the Lord.

O Israel, who's your hope in God, for mercy is within.

And who will redemption from their sins, His people here redeem.

And who will redeem you, that you will redeem you. This evening we will be continuing our series in Genesis.

[3 : 25] As we come to chapter 40 together, you can find that on page 33 in the Blue Church Bibles. That's Genesis chapter 40 on page 33.

Some time after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker committed an offense against their lord, the king of Egypt.

And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker. And he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard in the prison where Joseph was confined.

The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them. It continued for some time in custody. And one night they both dreamed, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison, each his own dream, and each dream with its own interpretation.

When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled. So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in custody in his master's house, Why are your faces downcast today?

[4 : 43] They said to him, We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them. And Joseph said to them, Do not interpretations belong to God?

Please tell them to me. So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph and said to him, In my dream there was a vine before me, and on the vine there were three branches.

As soon as it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and the clusters ripened into grapes. Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand.

Then Joseph said to him, This is its interpretation. The three branches are three days. In three days, Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office, and you shall place Pharaoh's cup in his hand as formerly, when you were his cupbearer.

Only remember me when it is well with you, and please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this house. For I was indeed stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the pit.

[5 : 57] When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was favorable, he said to Joseph, I also had a dream. There were three cake baskets on my head, and in the uppermost basket, there were all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating it out of the basket on my head.

And Joseph answered and said, This is its interpretation. The three baskets are three days. In three days, Pharaoh will lift up your head from you and hang you on a tree, and the birds will eat the flesh from you.

On the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, he made a feast for all his servants and lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants. He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand.

But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them. Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph. but forgot him. Amen.

Please do keep that open in front of you. But before we go any further, let's again come before the Lord in prayer. Father, feed us your sheep.

[7 : 16] Tend to us your lambs through the preaching of your word and the power of your spirit. All for your glory and our good. In Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. How have I ended up here? I wonder if you've ever asked yourself that question before.

Often, it's a question we ask ourselves after things have gone well, after life has taken such a positive turn that's just left us in grateful disbelief. Though when our circumstances change and our situation goes from bad to worse, the question no longer dances in our minds, but rather it rattles.

Especially when we find ourselves in a situation that we can rightly claim we don't deserve to be in. You're let go from work, even though you're the company's top performer.

You're betrayed from someone close to you that you only ever trusted. Or how about this one? You're thrown in prison after being falsely accused of trying to take advantage of another man's wife.

[8 : 37] Sound familiar? Well, that's because it's a situation that Joseph finds himself in. It's where we pick up the narrative of Jacob's descendants that started back in chapter 37.

If anyone could be asking themselves the question, how did I end up here? It's Joseph. And as we look to approach this chapter together, I believe it's a question that should be on our minds too.

Because if you look at chapter 40 in relation to the entire narrative, it can seem something of a needless diversion. It looked like last week, before the whole Potiphar wife situation, that Joseph was on the fast track to being raised to a position of prominence and power.

It looked like we're about to see what we've been waiting to see fulfilled ever since Joseph's first two dreams back in chapter 37. As we watched Joseph go from just an ordinary slave to head over all of Potiphar's estate.

It looked like the next sure thing was to go from Potiphar to Pharaoh. But instead, we've gone from Potiphar to prison.

[9 : 52] And on first reading, it doesn't really seem to make that much sense. But as we'll see together tonight, this is no needless diversion.

How has Joseph ended up in prison? Well, ultimately, because God sovereignly puts him there. God has more to show us back in the pit.

More of who he is and how he works. So let's look to see that together this evening. Because there are three things I think we see revealed to us in the midst of Joseph's suffering.

We see God's providence. We see God's provision. And lastly, we see God's timing. So let's use these three points as our handrails as we walk through the narrative together and see what truths it has to teach us.

Let's dive in by first seeing God's providence at work amidst Joseph's suffering. Our chapter begins with the words, sometime after this, which is linking back to the end of the previous chapter where we see Joseph being falsely accused and then wrongly imprisoned in the prison where the king's prisoners were confined.

[11 : 12] Now, even then, we see God's providence at work in the preservation of Joseph's life. Potiphar had bought Joseph as a slave. He could do with him as he liked and no one would have batted an eyelid if he executed him.

I mean, what else was a slave to expect? He was accused of trying to take advantage of his master's wife. But surprisingly, it's the king's prison that Joseph is sent.

And the thing that's repeated for us at the end of the chapter, just to make sure we don't miss it, is that the Lord was with Joseph. We see it stated in verse 2, while Joseph was at his high point over all of Potiphar's estate.

And then again at the end of the chapter when he's in prison, verse 21, emphasizing this invaluable truth. God is with Joseph in the valley just as much as he was with him on the mountaintop.

And in chapter 40, it's important we remember that before going any further. Because in chapter 40, we're going to see just how much God was with Joseph.

[12 : 25] just how much God's providence was working on his behalf even when he couldn't see it. Now verse 1 goes on to tell us a story that was likely to have made it into the nightly news back in Egypt.

Scandal has broken out in the royal palace. The cupbearer and the baker of no less than the king of Egypt have committed an offense. I mean, it's front page news.

The rumors are flying. Was it attempted poisoning or just a bad day in the kitchen? We aren't told. We're just told that they had committed an offense.

And whatever it was, it was serious. Because Pharaoh was raging. He's so angry that he orders them to be thrown in custody in the house of the captain of the guards in the prison where, lo and behold, Joseph is confined.

Joseph is about to get two disgraced officials as roommates. But not only roommates, he's going to have to serve them.

[13 : 35] As a captain of the guard appoints Joseph to be with them and to attend to their needs. Now, on paper, Joseph's situation doesn't look like it's getting that much better.

I mean, first, he's put in prison for a crime he didn't commit and now he has to serve two criminals. That doesn't look like God's with him.

That doesn't look like God's providence working things for Joseph's good. But unlike our own lives, we get to take a step back and view this event in light of the whole narrative.

You see, from a worldly perspective, this just might look like things have gotten worse for Joseph. But actually, God has brought the two people into Joseph's life that are going to be the means that he's brought before the king of Egypt.

If Joseph was to ask us to prove to him that God was really with him through this trial, what would we point to having the privilege of hindsight? Well, the two people he'd least expect us to.

[14 : 49] His two new roommates that he's currently having to attend and serve. You see, we don't have the ability to see our whole lives unfold into one story.

We don't have the whole narrative. And that's really hard to accept when we're in the midst of a difficult season. And it's even harder when it's happening to someone we love who knows the Lord and they come to us for counsel and all we can say is, I don't know.

I don't know how God is working through this for your good. But brothers and sisters, what we can do is look to the examples in God's word that he has left for us.

And we can see his faithfulness to his people then and see all the ways he was orchestrating things for their goods and say, if he was faithful to do it to them, he's been faithful and doing it for me.

One day, brothers and sisters, be assured, if you're in Christ, when you make it home to glory and you get to see your whole life unraveled into one seamless narrative, you'll be able to see what we're seeing with Joseph.

[16 : 09] God's hidden hand weaving the dark threads with the golden threads to put together a masterpiece. But before we move on to our second point this evening, there's one more thing I want to draw out from these verses, one more encouragement for us to see.

You see, we already know that God was sovereignly organizing these events for Joseph to be in the right place to meet the two right people. But let's just remind ourselves of the means that God used for this all to come together.

Potiphar's wife acted out of spite. Pharaoh acted out of anger. The captain of the guard acted out of duty. An innocent man convicted of a crime he didn't commit.

and two officers committing an offense against their king. Can you see it? God taking the bad from this world, bad motives, bad situations, and using them all for good.

I mean, one of the most powerful men at that time acts out in anger and God uses that for good. Two separate front page news stories weaved into God's plan for good.

[17 : 40] But now it's time to move on to our second point this evening where we see God's provision amidst Joseph's suffering. Verses 5 to 19. Now, this section details for us Joseph's interaction with the cupbearer and baker.

Now, we are told in verse 5 that both the cupbearer and the baker have separate dreams that both have their own interpretations. Now, the dreams left the two men very troubled.

So much so that when Joseph came to see them in the morning, he could tell by the look on their faces that something wasn't right. So Joseph, in a tender act of kindness, asked the men why they are so downcast.

They tell them. It's because they had dreams. And the worst part is that there's no one to interpret them. Now, dreams in Egyptian culture were a big deal.

There would be dream specialists that would have books upon books that they would use to supposedly give you the interpretation of your dream. But one of the downsides to being in prison, awaiting your penalty, is there's no dream specialists at hand.

[18 : 53] So the Egyptian officials are understandably upset and troubled. You see, Joseph knows something that they don't. He knows that the so-called dream specialists are scammers because the only one who can truly reveal the mystery of a dream is God.

So he tells them, verse 8, do not interpretations belong to God? God. And what he does next is quite staggering. He then goes on to say, please, tell them to me.

Here, Joseph, in the midst of his suffering, has pity on two unworthy officials and offers to help them. He's just said that God alone is the one who holds the answers.

what gives him the confidence to say, please, tell them to me. Just in passing, Joseph's confidence to serve came from his confidence that God was with him.

Even after being sold as a slave, even after being convicted of a crime he didn't commit, even in prison, Joseph knew that the Lord was with him.

[20 : 15] You see, you can only step out in service when you are sure that God is with you. And Joseph here in this moment shows us that our confidence of that shouldn't be based on how neat and tidy our lives are, or how pleasant the surroundings.

But as we continue with the narrative and it unfolds, we see that the two officials do tell their dreams to Joseph and God does provide the interpretations.

He gives Joseph the interpretation to each of the official dreams and here we see God providing for Joseph in the midst of his suffering. Again, reminding us that God truly is with him, providing for his need as he endures this time in prison.

Again, this should be an encouragement. if you're a Christian here tonight, whatever you're going through, whatever trial or storm you're in, God is with you and if he's with you, he will, he will provide for you.

as Jess Ray puts it beautifully in her song, lilies and sparrows, don't you know that your father in heaven knows just what you're needing?

[21 : 38] seek him first and everything else that you need will be given. Don't you see? He loves you much more than the lilies and sparrows.

Come, come rest. Don't waste a day being scared of tomorrow. as we think of God's provision for Joseph amidst his suffering in general terms, I believe if we pay close attention to the dreams and the details of the interpretations, we can see another layer to the provision of God for Joseph in this moment.

Yes, it's good that Joseph has been shown that once again God will provide for him. But God's showing him and us more than just that. So let's walk through verses 9 to 18 and see if we can piece it together.

Dream one comes from the cupbearer, verse 9. This is what he says, in my dream there was a vine before me, and on the vine there were three branches. As soon as it budded, its blossom shot forth, and the clusters ripened into grapes.

Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand. Now, before we start trying to sort through the collage of images, let's just go straight to the interpretation that makes sense of the puzzle.

[23 : 11] Look down to verse 13. In three days, Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office. God shows Joseph the message of the dream.

The cup bearer's head will be lifted up. Soon his time will come for him to be exalted. Now, time for the second dream.

This time from the baker, verse 16. I also had a dream. There were three cake baskets on my head, and in the uppermost basket there were all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating it out of the basket on my head.

Sounds a bit eerie, doesn't it? Birds eating things off your head. And look with me to verse 19 that makes sense of it all. In three days, Pharaoh will lift up your head from you and hang you on a tree, and the birds will eat the flesh from you.

While the cup bearer is being exalted, the baker will be brought even lower. So, through the interpretations of the dreams, what is God revealing to Joseph?

[24 : 30] Well, he's revealing to him that two heads are going to be lifted up. Two heads will be exalted. One head will be lifted to a place of exaltation, and the other head will be lifted from its body.

What's going on here? What's going on through the interpretation of the dreams? Jesus? I believe God's reminding Joseph and us of who's really sovereign over the exaltation of some and the bringing low of others.

God is the one who is over whose head is brought high and whose head is brought low. These two dreams and these two officials are a living example.

You see, they both didn't know their faith. they didn't know what awaited them, but God did. God knew about the lifting up of heads, and whether that's for better or for worse, and he reveals this to Joseph.

I think it helps for us to remember that Joseph from an early age knew that God was going to exalt him above his brothers to a position of prominence and importance.

[25 : 49] His two dreams in chapter 37 had shown him that. His head was to be lifted up, but ever since then, however, his life has been far from the life of ease.

And just when things looked like God's word were being fulfilled, and it looked like Joseph was finally going to be exalted, we've gone from Potiphar to prison.

Instead of being exalted, he's been brought even lower. And then in prison, when he has every reason to doubt, God shows him the fate of two men.

One will be raised up to be with the king, and the other will be brought low to death, reminding Joseph and showing him that it is God who ultimately knows who and when heads are lifted up and cast down.

God is confirmed through two unlikely men.

[26 : 57] God knows God knows. Ultimately, it shows us God is in control.

As we move on into point three this evening, where we see God's timing amidst Joseph's suffering. Now look down with me to verses 20 to 22.

What takes place in these verses? Well, on the third day, the chief cupbearer is restored to his position, while the baker is executed.

And what does the passage highlight at the end of verse 22? As Joseph had interpreted to them. on the third day, Joseph's words are fulfilled.

Or rather, God's words are fulfilled. The interpretations had come from him. Joseph was simply just a mouthpiece. On the third day, the dreams were fulfilled as God said they would be.

[28 : 05] On the third day, God's words about who would be exalted came true. For each man was promised through their own dream they received. So, Joseph, don't doubt he'll give you what you've been promised to.

But also, does that not sound familiar for us looking back at this event in light of the cross? Where else in the Bible is God's word fulfilled on the third day regarding the lifting up of a head?

It's at the resurrection of Jesus Christ when the new head of humanity is raised and exalted to his rightful place at the right hand of God.

You see, Jesus lived his life considering his future exaltation. Jesus endured his time as a suffering servant knowing one day he'd be the glorified and risen king.

and Joseph, who is merely just a shadow of Christ, was to endure his suffering in the knowledge that one day in God's timing he was going to be raised up.

[29 : 19] One day what he was promised in a dream would come into reality. Now, none of us here are Joseph.

And you might be thinking, well, that's great, but I haven't been given a dream one day I will be exalted by God. And that's true. But brothers and sisters, if you're in Christ, you've been given that promise.

One day, in his time, you will be exalted by God. Since Christ was raised and exalted, so shall you be. Where he went, we follow in union with him, seated in heavenly places.

And one day, he will bring us to be with him. So being reminded that God knows and is in control of who is raised up and cast down is a great encouragement to us this evening.

Those who he said will be exalted will be exalted. Those who he says will be cast down will be cast down.

[30 : 33] His word will be fulfilled. It always is in his time. And the cat bearer and the baker are a living example. So let me just simply ask you, what group are you in tonight?

Are you safe? And amongst those who await being raised up to be with Christ in paradise, are you amongst those who will be cast down? God's word will be fulfilled in his time.

The day is coming. If you're not safe in Christ, awaiting that day with joy, then be warned, you're living on borrowed time.

Please, whoever you are, run to Christ. Cry out to him to save you, trusting in his goodness and his forgiveness, and you can become one who knows that on the last day you'll be raised up to glory.

But to those of you who are on the hard road this evening, whatever twists and turns you are yet still to face, know for certain that if you're in Christ, however hard the road may be that he has called you to walk, it leads to a final destination of you being brought home to be with him, brought home to reign with Christ for all eternity, brought home to paradise, to the room in glory that he is now as we speak preparing for you.

[32 : 20] God's will come to Now with all that said, it could be tempting to just brush past the final verse tonight, verse 23, verse 23.

But let's end where the passage does, with Joseph being forgotten. Please look down with me to verse 23, yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

Now, what really makes this verse so poignant is the context of verse 14, where after Joseph had given the cupbearer the favorable interpretation, he had said to him, only remember me when it is well with you, and please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this house, for I was indeed stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the pit.

You see, on the third day, the dreams of the cupbearer and baker came into fulfillment. But in God's timing, Joseph was going to have to wait.

How long was he going to have to wait? Well, just look down to chapter 41, verse 1. He was going to have to wait two whole years before his did.

[33 : 55] To Joseph's cry for deliverance, God's providence said, no. Two more years, Joseph. Two more years in the pit.

Now, many of you in this room can resonate with this experience. You too have cried out asking to be delivered from present suffering, thinking it was just around the corner, but you've been made away.

That might be even you tonight. What are we to do when we are forgotten by man and it makes us feel like we are forgotten by God?

What do we do when suffering that's out with our control continues? When you feel forgotten and the suffering continues, remember, remember, remember, remember God's with you in the valley just as much as he's with you on the mountaintop.

Remember God in all situation works for the good of those who love him. He can use the bad situations of this world, bad motives and bad events for good.

[35 : 24] Remember, if God is with you, he will, he will provide for you. Remember that you await a day when you'll be exalted to reign with Christ for all eternity.

Set your hope there. Walk the hard road looking to the horizon to where it leads, paradise, exalted with Christ.

And lastly, remember God's timing. Entrust yourself to him. He's never late. He's always on time.

And in his hands, he weaves the dark threads with the golden. And one day, you'll get to see the beautiful tapestry that he's crafting through your life.

It might look and feel like a mess right now. All you can see is loose threads. But remember, nothing looked more hopeless than Jesus being laid to rest in a tomb.

[36 : 36] But we know that's not where the story ended. God's crafting through your tears. God's crafting through your heartbreak.

a narrative you'll one day look back on in glory and praise him for. So let's come together before him in prayer as we close.

Let's pray. Lord, thank you for your sovereignty. Thank you that you're ultimately in control.

Lord, we don't have our whole lives before us. We can't see all the ways you are stitching things together. And Lord, you know that. You know our limitations.

You remember we are but dust. But Lord, you don't call us to understand. You call us to trust you. So please, Abba, Father, make us a people who entrust ourselves to you even when the pain continues.

[37 : 42] Even when we never choose to walk the path you've given us. Help us to set our hopes in the future you've promised. Paradise, reigning with Christ.

Lord, may we taste the sweetness of that more and more, I pray. And may that strengthen weary saints here tonight. And Lord, for those who came into this building or perhaps are listening to this online and have not yet entrusted themselves to you, Holy Spirit, cause them to bend the knee to Christ so they might be amongst those who will be exalted and not cast down for their sins.

As we come to sing our last song of praise to you this evening, would you make the lyrics come alive to us? Soothe our souls with the truths that are contained and cause our hearts and affections to be warmed towards you once again.

All for your glory and our good. Amen. Amen. We will close by singing the words of Be Still, My Soul.

Be Still, my soul.

[39 : 18] The Lord is on your side. Bear patiently, the wage of greed or pain.

through everyise We are called to order and combine. Through every change, He grateful will remain.

Praise to my soul, your gracious heavenly prayer. The glory waits, leads to a joyful end.

Be still, my soul, your God will undertake. To guide the future as He has the past.

Your hope, your confidence, their loving chain. All now, His secrets shall be right at last.

[40 : 55] Be still, my soul, the winds and waves of the Lord. His voice to rule, then when He dwell below.

Be still, my soul, the day is haste in awe.

When we shall be forever with the Lord. When disappointment, grief and fear are gone.
Sorrow for God, then love's pure joy is sold. Be still, my soul, when change and days are past.

In His safe presence we shall meet at last. The Lord bless you and keep you.

[42 : 21] The Lord make His face to shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord turn His face towards you and give you peace. Amen.