

# Heads Up

## *Christ in the Story of Genesis 40*

- <sup>1</sup> Some time after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker committed an offense against their lord the king of Egypt.
- <sup>2</sup> And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker,
- <sup>3</sup> and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined.
- <sup>4</sup> The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them. They continued for some time in custody.
- <sup>5</sup> 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.
- <sup>6</sup> When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled.
- <sup>7</sup> So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in custody in his master's house, "Why are your faces downcast today?"
- <sup>8</sup> 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."
- <sup>9</sup> So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph and said to him, "In my dream there was a vine before me,
- <sup>10</sup> and on the vine there were three branches. As soon as it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and the clusters ripened into grapes.
- <sup>11</sup> 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."
- <sup>12</sup> Then Joseph said to him, "This is its interpretation: the three branches are three days.
- <sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> 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."

<sup>16</sup> 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,

<sup>17</sup> 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."

<sup>18</sup> And Joseph answered and said, "This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days.

<sup>19</sup> 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."

<sup>20</sup> 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.

<sup>21</sup> He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand.

<sup>22</sup> But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them.

<sup>23</sup> Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

### Genesis 40:1-23

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## Heads Up Boys

Joseph, the man of God, once told a frightened man, “**In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head.**” A moment later, he told another frightened man, “**In three days**

Pharaoh will lift up your head.” The thing is, the exact same statement had the exact opposite meaning.

We have a phrase that is related to this in America, at least in terms of the wording. It is the phrase, “Heads up.” We use it with some frequency. It began about 100 years ago, when newspaper writers coined it in the sports world. In June of 1924, the *New York Times* wrote, “The entire Tiger team played heads-up ball and closed the year with nineteen victories and four defeats.” It was used to express alertness and action. Since then it has come to mean holding one’s head up high and concentrating on what one is doing. “The boss was coming. Jim gave us a heads up to get on with some work.” It can also be a warning such as the Washington Post’s August 1979, “In a message characterized as a ‘heads up alert’, intelligence officials warned ... that Arab diplomats had suggested that Ambassador Andrew Young meet with a Palestine Liberation Organization official.” So here it means, “Look alive! – Watch out!” “Heads up, you guys ... We ain’t licked yet.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gary Martin, “The meaning and origin of the expression: Heads up,” *The Phrase Finder*, <http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/heads-up.html>, last accessed 3-5-2025.

The word “head” (*rosh*), has only appeared in six verses in Genesis up to this point (2:10; 3:15; 8:5; 11:4; 28:12, 18). In only two of those occurrences has it actually referred to someone’s head. Now, in just one chapter, it is used five times (Gen 40:13, 16, 17, 19, 20<sub>x2</sub>), thus making it a chief word to help us interpret things correctly. It is combined in this wonderful but yet frightening idea that Joseph communicates to these two men, and what it signifies it **beyond your wildest imagination**.

## **Joseph in Prison**

The story before us today is quite fascinating on several levels. It takes place in an **Egyptian prison**. Back in **Gen 39:20** it was called a “**house**” (*bayith*) where “prisoners” were “confined.” In the chapter today we learn that it is “**in the house of the captain of the guard**” (**Gen 40:30**). The captain of the guard is **Potiphar** (**37:36; 39:1**), so Joseph has been transferred from a man over the entire house of Potiphar to part of that same house, the part where prisoners were kept.

The end of Genesis 39 is actually the logical beginning of the story today. It helps to form the following chiasm:

- A. Joseph put in prison (39:20-23)
  - B. Cupbearer and Baker imprisoned (40:1-4)
    - C. Two Dreams (40:5-8)
      - D. Cupbearers dream interpreted: salvation (40:9-13)
        - E. Remember me (40:14-15)
          - D<sup>1</sup>. Baker's dream interpreted: judgment (40:16-19)
            - C<sup>1</sup>. Two Dreams fulfilled (40:20)
              - B<sup>1</sup>. Cupbearer restored, Baker executed (40:21-22)
                - A<sup>1</sup>. Joseph stays in prison (40:23)

As we can see, Joseph begins and ends in prison. But much happens in between. Two other prisoners are thrown in with him. They each have a dream. Joseph interprets the dreams, which end up being fulfilled. **At the center** of the chiasm, and hence the story, we have Joseph's plea to the cupbearer to remember him after he is freed. "Remember." What the story tells is a remarkable tale of God's **power**, God's **goodness**, God's **justice**, and the **suffering** he often calls his people to endure. But there is something else here, something that a few have noticed, and which escapes the pens of many fine commentators. As we look at the story and think about its language, see you can pick up on what I'm hinting at here. At the end, we will see clearly what a

glorious picture of the gospel Genesis 40 actually is.

## Glorifying God in Prison

At the end of Genesis 39, we discovered that Potiphar threw Joseph into prison for supposedly trying to rape his wife, which he did not do. And yet, we also saw that, just as happened early in that chapter, so now the LORD was with Joseph, showing him steadfast love, and giving him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison (39:21). So great was this favor that the keeper actually put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners (Gen 39:22). So trustworthy was he that the keeper paid no attention to anything in Joseph's charge, because the LORD was with him (23).

Chapter 40 begins, “Some time after this” (Gen 40:1). We don't know how long this was. We do know that the total time he was a slave was thirteen years (37:2; 41:46). Obviously, he had to be in prison long enough to gain the trust of the keeper, so it was probably a considerable amount of time. After being sold into slavery by his brothers for absolutely no reason other than their own anger and jealousy, after being falsely accused of adultery by an evil woman bent on destroying his life, Joseph now

waits for the promise of God to come to pass. Years earlier, remember, he had **two dreams** that foretold of a day when his family would bow down to him. Now he has all the time in the world to think about these things as he rots away in prison.

But rather than sulk or get depressed or let his circumstances and lot in life cause him to lose faith, Joseph honors God to the best of his ability *in prison*. Recently, I was reminded of that famous Martin Luther quote, “**A Christian shoe-maker does his duty not by putting little crosses on the shoes, but by making good shoes.**” How would a prisoner in jail “do his duty?” Well, Joseph shows us how. He becomes a trustworthy servant willing to work and do what he is told while in jail, even though he had done nothing deserving of being there in the first place. What a remarkably different attitude than I’m sure many of us would have. Nevertheless, this is exactly how a prisoner would glorify God. Certainly, if he could do such a thing in jail, you can do it in the place God has put you.

## **Two High Level Inmates**

Because he rises to such a high place of authority in the prison, new prisoners would enter by going through him.

He became a strange mixture of both a prisoner and a [warden](#). Of course, new prisoners were coming in all the time. But on one occasion two very important people entered the gloomy dungeon in handcuffs. One had the former profession of a [cupbearer](#) of the king of Egypt. The other was his [baker](#). Both committed some kind of offense against Pharaoh.

We have no idea what the offense was, but it is probable that it was related to their jobs. Cupbearers had the unfortunate job of being the people who drank the first [sip](#) of the king's wine to make sure that it was not poisoned. That way, they would die rather than the king. Nehemiah is the most famous cupbearer in the Bible ([Neh 1:11](#)). But that wasn't the only thing he did. That wouldn't justify having a person in the royal court. In actuality, these men had to be skilled at [selecting](#) fine wines, [serving](#) pure and quality food, [administrating](#) the food and court accounts (including, importantly, the hiring of the food staff), [being winsome](#) companions for the king (since they would be in his presence on a regular basis), and keeping a [close eye](#) on anyone trying to infiltrate the staff to kill the king. Thus, some cupbearers were considered [second only](#)



to the king himself.<sup>2</sup> You know what a baker is, and it seems that this particular cup bearer also hired the baker (“his baker”).

Some speculate that perhaps one or both tried to poison the king. But if that were true, there is no way they simply get thrown into prison, unless of course it was only temporary. Whoever wrote the book of Jasher speculates that there was negligence going on. “And whilst they were eating and drinking ... Pharaoh's ministers found many flies in the wine, which the butler had brought, and stones of nitre (potassium nitrate) were found in the baker's bread” (Jasher 46:4). In other words, the food was rotten. Now that could certainly get you thrown into prison.

This plausible speculation (or perhaps oral tradition) explains why Pharaoh would be “angry with the two officers” (Gen 40:2), and why he would throw them into custody in Potiphar’s house where Joseph was (3). At any rate, the captain places these two characters in the custody of Joseph who would attend to them for some lengthy, but

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<sup>2</sup> Tobit 1:22. See H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, vol. 16, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 174; John H Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 128.

unknown, period of time (4). This sets the scene for a most unusual night in the life of both men formerly serving in the king's court.

## Two Dreams

On that fateful night, both men had fitful sleep. They awoke, each to his own troubling dream, each in desperate need of immediate interpretation (5). For in the ancient world, “A pair of dreams, it was thought, indicated certainty of fulfillment.”<sup>3</sup> When Joseph came in the morning to attend them, “he saw that they were troubled” (6). Oh, dear! What can the matter be? So he asked them, “Why are your faces downcast today?” (7). “They said to him, ‘We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them’” (8).

And now, beloved, behold the providence of God! For who is this to whom they speak? Why, it is the same man who himself had two dreams a dozen years earlier. Two dreams that had yet to be fulfilled. Two dreams that he could interpret. They speak now to Joseph, the only man in all of Egypt who knew the living God. There are no

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<sup>3</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 469.

odds of such a thing. It is pure and simple: Divine providence. The rest of Jesus tells us why God would do this.

For now, “Do not interpretations belong to God?” he asks them. God is the God of all things, and what is a dream to him? But this would have been a rather remarkable question to ask two polytheistic Egyptians, Egyptians who knew that dreams were supposed to be interpreted by professional priests using “dream books” that were to be consulted to identify the meanings of various parts of the dream. Of course, they also got paid for their craft. Yet here was a slave in the same prison as they were saying, “Please tell them to me” (8). Not a professional. Not getting paid. No book to help him, only his God.

From Joseph’s perspective, I think this is also remarkable. Joseph’s own dreams had yet to be fulfilled. Yet in spite of that, and in the midst of great suffering in prison with no visible means of seeing his dreams fulfilled, nevertheless he so completely trusts in God that he offers to interpret these men’s dream, believing with absolute certainty that he can do so. This is the very definition of faith. It is the assurance of what you hope for and the

conviction of things not seen (**Heb 11:1**). And it is not faith in faith. It is faith in God. His actions prove that he has not lost hope for himself. At this very moment he still believes that God will fulfill his own two dreams. Therefore, he can interpret the two dreams before him now. You should think long and hard on this point when you consider your own faith and how easy you may find it to want to give up, when your own circumstances are but the tiniest fraction of the injustice and suffering that was known to Joseph. So not give up. God knows what he is doing *with you*.

### *The Cupbearer's Dream*

At this invitation, the cupbearer thinks to himself, “Why not. What do I have to lose? No one else will interpret it for me.” Thus he tells Joseph, “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” (**Gen 40:9-11**). Given that his occupation deals with wine and that his dream is about a vine, and given that Pharaoh threw him in prison, and his dream is about Pharaoh, you

can see why he might be rather troubled, especially when you know that dreams have meaning, even prophetic meaning.

The Scripture now says simply, “Then Joseph said to him, ‘This is its interpretation: ...’” (12). There is no hint of hesitation. There is no mention of consulting books or oracles (as if he even could). It appears to be an immediate answer. Whether Joseph spent a while in prayer, is certainly possible, perhaps even probable. But the image that forms in my mind is that Christ simply conveys the meaning to Joseph there on the spot. However it came to him, this was his interpretation:

“The three branches are three days” (12). You should know here that Joseph is actually using well attested rules for interpreting dreams, rules that he used back when he had his own dreams with their “sevens.” “For instance, the idea that the number of items indicates the number of days/years has precedent in the [Egyptian and Mesopotamian] literature. The symbols in these dreams are similar to some of those found in the dream books. A full goblet, for instance, is indicative of having a name and offspring. Carrying fruit on one’s head is indicative of

sorrow.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, Joseph was not giving some kind of out-of-body ecstatic utterance (like we see in many Pentecostal circles). He was using his mind and God was communicating information to him in a very sober, understandable, learned manner. This fits with what he know and will learn about Joseph and his ability to learn from the culture around him, while maintaining his faithfulness to his God in the midst of so much paganism. Since I’ve mentioned the **three days** here, keep them in mind as I will return to them in a way that Joseph does not.

Continuing on, “**In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head**” (13). There is the phrase we started with this morning. But what does it mean here? “... and restore you to your office, and you shall place Pharaoh’s cup in his hand as formerly, when you were his cupbearer” (13). It is obvious that this is a very favorable interpretation for the cupbearer. It is not obvious in these words as to why God would restore him to such a position. Therefore, let us continue.

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<sup>4</sup> John H Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 128–129 citing F. H. Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and its Near Eastern Environment* (JSOTSup 142; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 270 and Oppenheim, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 279, 288–89.

One of the reasons makes itself apparent in the next verse. “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 stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the pit.” (14-15). As we saw, this is the logical, literary, and theological center of the story. Joseph does two things in these two verses.

First, It appears to Joseph that God is going to save this man, perhaps as a means of saving himself. At least, that is how Joseph uses it. Remember me when you come into the king’s court. Joseph uses a phrase (“remember me”) and an idea (the court of the king) here that will be used many centuries later in an analogous situation. Second, he justifies himself to the cupbearer, hoping that he will take his request seriously. But who is he talking about in his justification? Who is the “they” that threw him into the pit? His brothers or the Egyptians? Notice here that he uses the word “pit.” Just as Joseph has been disrobed twice and been a part of two pair of dreams, so this is the second “pit” he has been thrown into. It is not a coincidence in the Divine Author’s mind that he uses the word “pit” for this

prison, as we will see shortly.

### *The Baker's Dream*

First, we come to **the baker** (this almost feels like a nursery rhyme, except that it is completely true). Like the cupbearer, he too is frightened of his dream. But “**When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was favorable [the interpretation puts him at ease], 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’**” (**Gen 40:16-17**). Again, given that his occupation deals with **food** and that his dream is about a **cake baskets**, and given that **Pharaoh** threw him in prison, and his dream is about **Pharaoh**, you can see why he might be rather troubled, especially when you know that dreams have meaning, even prophetic meaning. But his appears to be a darker dream than the cupbearer’s. He can now probably figure out what the first part means, but “**What does it mean that the birds were eating it out of a basket on my head?**” What a strange image. A gourmet feast of yummy kingly cakes pecked at by birds on the man’s



head?<sup>5</sup>

“And Joseph answered and said, ‘This is its interpretation: the three baskets are the three days’ (18). So far so good. “In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head ...” (19). Excellent! You can imagine the excitement growing in the baker’s heart as he is about to be the first William Wallace and yell, “Freedom!”

“—from you! And hang you on a tree.” Whoops! That wasn’t what he was expecting. And that, frankly, was just a mean trick by Joseph to string him along like that, with the exact same language he gave to the cupbearer, only to deliver such devastating news. But how does he know? Because this is the meaning of the birds eating: “The birds will eat the flesh from you” (19). The way Joseph treats the baker almost with mockery as he delivers the interpretation makes me believe that he had been watching these two men in prison for quite some time. The cupbearer was going to be released because at the end of the day he was innocent. True, he didn’t do as good of a job as he should, but the

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<sup>5</sup> The Egyptian dictionary “lists 38 kinds of cake and 57 varieties of bread.... These facts, while proving that the Egyptians were first-class gourmets, also give a particular significance to the words of the chief baker which may be literally translated, ‘There were in the top basket all sorts of foods for Pharaoh, masterpieces of the pastry cook’ ” (Vergote, *Joseph en Égypte*, 37), cited in Wenham, 384.

true scoundrel here was the baker. Now he is about to get what he deserved. His character was evident to anyone with eyes to see. He deserved such ridicule because he was a conniving, evil man.

Please note one thing about this punishment. It is how the man will be **hanged on a tree**. This is an aggravated form of the death penalty. “**The baker will not simply be executed, but his corpse will be impaled and exposed. This treatment was designed to prevent his spirit from resting in the afterlife. The mention of the birds eating his flesh is both gruesome and emphatic.**”<sup>6</sup> Yet, like several points that arose in the cupbearer’s interpretation, this image also has a tie-in to something that will occur much later, beyond the life of Joseph.

## **Fulfillment of the Dreams**

Four verses remain in the story. The first sets the stage. It tells us about a time, exactly as predicted, **three days hence (Gen 40:20)**. Pharaoh made a feast for all his servants. Lo and behold, he “**lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his**

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<sup>6</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, vol. 2, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 384.

servants.” In other words, he set them free. It was Pharaoh’s birthday. In ancient Egyptian literature, you occasionally run across amnesty that is granted on a Pharaoh’s birthday.

The next two verses tell us about the fulfillment. “He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand” (21). It is exactly as he dreamed. “But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them” (22). Anyone who thinks God doesn’t know the future really needs to sit down and explain such a thing. This is not Joseph being a lucky guesser, but consider the whole package: the ability to give such dreams (the dreams themselves were not accidents), in a prison where there are no interpreters, where Joseph just so happens to be, with an interpretation that is exactly on the mark from the events and their timing as he prophecies from a dark and lonely pit of a prison, where no one had hope of ever being released.

**R. Kent Hughes** considers Joseph at the moment he hears that these dreams were fulfilled. “How heartening for Joseph! For eleven years he had believed that his dreams would come true. He had never wavered in his conviction,

despite his circumstances. And now he had solid objective evidence of his power, through God, to interpret dreams.”<sup>7</sup>

You can certainly imagine how at this moment he really would have believed that God would now use these events to bring freedom to himself and thus begin the fulfillment of his own dreams. For Pharaoh’s part, he probably would have thought nothing more about this, though God was using such an occasion as an instrument for great and mighty work. For the cupbearers part, well, the last verse leaves us hanging (pardon the pun), rather badly.

“Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him” (23). This remarkable ending leaves us wanting more. What will happen to Joseph? Is his faith misplaced after all? Was he wrong to believe his dreams would ever be fulfilled? How could it be after such a marvelous display of divine power at the hands of his God in the fulfillment of these two dreams? It also leaves us sad and wondering why. Why would God continue to pour suffering upon a man who has suffered so much for a dozen years now? Why would God not let him be released

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<sup>7</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 472.

immediately? Why doesn't he do that for Christians around the world? Why doesn't he do that for me? Why do I have to continue to deal with this lot God has cast for my life? We cannot answer that question for him until we come to later passages.

But **we can answer that question for ourselves today.** Oh, not in terms of physical suffering that God does bring upon his people in this life. But rather, in terms of **the freedom he offers** to those who trust in Christ. The freedom of the cupbearer combined with the continued suffering of Joseph, both simultaneously. What I am about to say is now intimately related to what we have just read. It all comes from the language of Genesis itself. Yet, it is at just this point that so many fall so woefully short, and do not see the Lord Jesus right in front of their eyes. May God give us the sight to see that which is plainly revealed by causing us to increasingly seek a Christ-centered interpretation of this text.

Long ago, **Ambrose of Milan**, the teacher of Augustine, set us on the right course saying, **“But even though he forgot, Christ did not forget but spoke to the [cupbearer]”**

(Ambrose, *On Joseph* 6.32).<sup>8</sup> The great Father recognizes more than many that the God of Joseph here is Christ. Christ is the one who revealed the dreams. Since it is Christ, and since Christ knows the future, it is no difficult trail to follow when we begin to consider some of the events that took place late in his own life as they regard the events of the story of the Cupbearer and the Baker. Here, I owe a debt of gratitude to **Arthur Pink**, one of the few courageous enough to see and speak of some of the following connections.<sup>9</sup> Following Ambrose he too says, “But observe that in doing this he was careful to ascribe the glory to Another, saying, “Do not interpretations belong to God?” (40:8). So the One whom Joseph foreshadowed, again and again, made known what should come to pass in the future, yet did he say, “For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak” John 12:49).”<sup>10</sup> What a beautiful thing it is to see the connection here between Christ in the NT and Christ

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<sup>8</sup> In Mark Sheridan, *Genesis 12-50*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture OT 2 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 261.

<sup>9</sup> See Arthur Walkington Pink, *Gleanings in Genesis* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2005), 369.

<sup>10</sup> Pink, 370.

in the OT.

But things get much more specific and fascinating quickly. In no particular order, let us start with the two men of the story: the cupbearer and the baker. Pink notes, “*Two* malefactors [were] crucified with [Christ], so *two* offenders were in the prison with Joseph!”<sup>11</sup> Of those two with Christ, one is saved, the other is not. “One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, ‘Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!’ But the other rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.’ And he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ And he said to him, ‘Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise’” (Luke 23:39-43).

Not only are the two pairs of men’s destinies analogous, did you catch his phrase there? “Remember Me.” Not only that, but remember me when you come into your kingdom. Christ is the king, and this man will be restored to the king’s court.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 369.

What were the three men doing there on that hill in Jerusalem? They were **hanging**. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us-- for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree’” (**Gal 3:13**) Pink again writes, “The ‘Curse,’ referred to here by the baker being “hanged on a tree” (cf. **Gal 3:13**). So it was at the Cross: the one thief went to Paradise; the other to Perdition.”<sup>12</sup>

How long would it be for our Lord before he would be restored to his Kingdom in heaven? **Three days**. For three days he would be accursed of God and forsaken. “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise” (**Mark 9:31**; cf. **Matt 12:40**; **26:61**; etc.).

The oldest creed of all says, “He was buried ... he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures” (**1Co 15:4**). Where was he buried? In the pit. Sung Messianically, “O LORD, you have brought up my soul from Sheol; you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit” (**Ps 30:3**). “Like one set loose among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, like those

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<sup>12</sup> Pink, 370.



whom you remember no more, for they are cut off from your hand. You have put me in the depths of the pit, in the regions dark and deep” (Ps 88:5-6).

Two other connections are seen just before his death, on the night in which he was betrayed. Do not forget that it is a cupbearer who is restored. Ambrose says, “He was chief of the eunuchs who supplied the wine for the cups of the king!” (Ambrose, *ibid.*). Can you see the beauty of what is about to follow? “It is not without good reason that the Holy Spirit has seen fit to record the details of these dreams. Connected with the spared one, the [cupbearer], we read of ‘the cup’ into which the grapes were pressed (49:10–12), suggesting to us the precious Blood of the Lamb, by which all who believe are delivered.”<sup>13</sup> At the supper, the King lifts the cup to give us our redemption. And what does he say? “‘This do in remembrance of Me.’ As we admire these lovely typical pictures, like the queen of Sheba, there is no more strength left in us, and we can only bow our heads and say, ‘How precious are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

the sum of them!”<sup>14</sup> This is what the Scripture should do to you and for you—cause **doxology** to well up inside of you so that you are overwhelmed with the power and goodness of the God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ by the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. No one but God could have written something like this into real history.

This is the one who, like the cupbearer (to steal Ambrose one more time) was “raise[d] up in power.” He was raised upon in power so that all who trust in him might themselves find pardon. With that, let me leave you with some thoughts that return us to where we began. When pardoned, Dr. Sarna says, “**You Literally, ‘lift up your head,’ that is, you will regain your dignity, honor, and independence. The inability to ‘raise the head’ is synonymous with indignity, shame, and a state of subjection.**”<sup>15</sup> This is both the warning and the wonder of the passage before us. If you will not look to Christ, you will be the baker of the story, and for your carelessness, perhaps even desire to poison the king, and refusal to

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. **2 Kings 25:27**. For the opposite, cf. Job 10:15; Judg. 8:28; Zech. 2:4. Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 278.

submit and repent, the Justice will have your head.

But for those who lift up their head in hope and submission, there is restoration and pardon. Lifting up your head, Calvin says, “signifies to raise any one from a low and contemptible condition, to one of some reputation.”<sup>16</sup>

Our Lord said, “When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:28 KJV). So heads up, beloved. Salvation has drawn near this hour in Christ. The king of glory has come in. “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift *them* up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he *is* the King of glory. Selah” (Ps 24:7-10 KJV).

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<sup>16</sup> John Calvin and John King, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, vol. 2 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 309–310.

## Echoes of the Cross in the Cupbearer, Baker, and Joseph (Gen 40)

OT	NT
Do not interpretations belong to God?	I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.
Two offenders in prison with Joseph	Two criminals crucified with Christ
The cupbearer saved	One criminal saved (“in paradise”)
The baker judged	One criminal judged
Joseph: “Remember me” when you return to the Pharaoh’s court	Saved criminal: “Remember me when you come into your kingdom.”
Baker hanged	Jesus hanged (on a tree).
Three days in the pit	Three days in Sheol (the pit)
Cupbearer and baker: wine and bread	Jesus and the Last Supper (in remembrance)
Cupbearer raised up in power	Christ raised up in power (resurrection)
Cupbearer pardoned “Head lifted up”	Christians pardoned (Lift up your heads!)