

The Story of Joseph

The Silver Cup

Part 46 – May 12, 2013



We've talked about Oxford's radio-carbon dating project¹, published in *Science* magazine two years ago, that has unified the world's top archaeologists with a firm Egyptian chronology. ("Dating Joseph" 10/07/12)

And, how the only two *anchor-dates* found in tombs, happen to occur at the time of Joseph and Moses. ("The Harvest Years" 12/02/12)

And we've used that information along with scriptural timespans, taken at face value, to place Joseph in a historical context; and we've seen that Sensusret II is the Pharaoh who released him.

When we left off, Joseph was feasting and drinking with his brothers, and, in between crying jags, having a *great* time! But, what type of men have these men who betrayed him become?



Everyone's fine when everything's good. **Only when we're tried and tested can we see our true colors.** And he's seen theirs! So many people handle problems by skipping town, breaking promises, making threats, or forsaking friends. **We'll do whatever it takes, to satisfy our desires, if our desires are all-important.** Joseph needs to hear more than his brothers' words; so, he stuffs their mouths with silver, to hear what's in their hearts.

Now Joseph gave these instructions to the steward of his house: "Fill the men's sacks with as much food as they can carry, and put each man's silver in the mouth of his sack."

[for the 2nd time!] – Genesis 44:1 NIV



Joseph has learned that **what seem to be our deepest desires are usually just our loudest desires**, and a quick fix is neither either. Joseph was sold for silver. Silver symbolized betrayal and rejection. But, he's forging it into a sterling symbol of unmerited grace.²

"Then put my cup ..." – Genesis 44:2a NIV

Something else, *besides the silver*, is refined in this story: a cup. A royal cup. Sensusret's cup. When Sensusret throws his chief cupbearer in prison, the cup represents royal wrath and judgment. But, he dreams of crushing grapes into it, from *three* branches, and just as Joseph predicts, three days later, when he's royally reinstated, the cup is part of a celebration of restoration.³

¹ Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit: <http://c14.arch.ox.ac.uk/embed.php?File=egypt.html>

² We covered this in the sermon: "Hidden Treasure" (02/24/13)

³ We covered this in the sermons: "Serving Time" (09/09/12) and "The Butler Didn't Do It" (09/16/12)



4,000-year-old Silver vessels

The royal cup was most likely silver, because in the 12th Dynasty, silver was more precious than gold. And it seems Senusret's father (Amenemhat II) used silver cups as royal gifts. In fact, under a temple to Montu, a falcon-god of war, Senusret's dad buried about 150 silver cups. And in 1936 they were discovered.⁴

"Then put my cup, the silver one ..." [Maybe that's *the* royal cup!] – Genesis 44:2b NIV

Maybe it was a gift, from Senusret, when he raised him to power, for interpreting his dreams, at his cupbearer's suggestion, and saving his nation. Could'a happened. Wild speculation. Whatever the case, we know it's a one-of-a-kind cup, because the only thing Joseph says to describe it is, "the silver one".

... in the mouth of the youngest one's [Benjamin's] sack along with the silver for his grain." And he did as Joseph said. [Interestingly, the silver that Judas received, and the cup of wrath that Jesus bore, all took place in the land of Benjamin] As morning dawned, the men were sent on their way with their donkeys. – Genesis 44:2c-3 NIV

I can't help but think of Jesus riding in as everyone cheered. And we're reminded, **when things are going good, enjoy it, it won't last long.** And, **when things are going bad, endure it, it won't last long.** Two truer truths have never been told!

They had not gone far from the city when Joseph said to his steward, "Go after those men at once, and when you catch up with them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid good with evil? Isn't this the cup my master drinks from and also uses for divination?' – Genesis 44:4-5a NIV

First, this is just part of his plan; he doesn't actually use it for divination.⁵ That's why he only describes it as a silver cup, and has to instruct his steward to say it's used for divination.

Second, he wants this asked in a way that presumes the brothers know the answers. He must've drunk from it at the party. But, when would they think they saw him *also use it for divination*? Remember when he seated them according to their birth order? He would've only had to glance into the cup a couple times.

Third, I think God is telling *us* that this one-of-a-kind cup that the master drinks from *was designed to divine* something divinely designed, to foretell what was to come ... and now *has*.

After taking the cup, [Jesus] gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you [in advance] I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." – Luke 22:17-18 NIV

That was the third of four cups (Luke 22:20) served in a traditional Passover meal. Each represents a promise from Exodus 6:6-7.

⁴ Four bronze coffers, marked with the name of Amenemhat II, and containing 153 mostly silver vessels, and other various silver items, were discovered by F. Bisson de la Roque, under the temple of Montu, at El-Tod, in 1936.

⁵ Do not practice divination or sorcery. – Leviticus 19:26 NIV



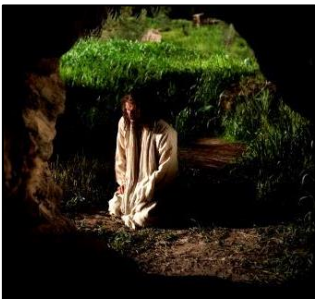
... “I am the Lord, and [1st Cup] I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. [2nd Cup] I will free you from being slaves to them, and [3rd Cup, the one we just saw Jesus giving to His disciples to divide and drink among themselves] I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. [4th Cup] I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God ...” – Exodus 6:6b-7a NIV

When Jesus offers this fourth and final cup, He explains that He must become the very contents, of the cup of wrath, poured out.



Then he took the cup, gave thanks and [without drinking] offered it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father’s kingdom.” When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. – Matthew 26:27-30 NIV

[This is where He prayed, for one hour, three times, (Mat 26:40-45) for God to allow this bitter cup of wrath to pass over Him] And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.” – Matthew 26:39 NAS



Jesus saw something horrific, beyond death, beyond comprehension: **all goodness and power and light was to be sucked out of him for our sake.** And still, He trusts and obeys! He’s saying, **“No matter what I’m feeling, Father, I know that your desires are ultimately my desires. So, help me do what we both know must be done.”** And, He doesn’t run. And, during those three hours of darkness on the cross, (Mat 27:45) the Light and Life of the World was emptied and extinguished, for the sake of the world, and for all the world to see.

About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” — which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” – Matthew 27:45b-46 NIV

Indicating that every last drop of Living Water had been poured out, and He’d become just like *us* in every way, a shadow of His former self, and God had to hide His face, as He had with Moses, (Ex 33:18-23) so His glory wouldn’t consume His Suffering Servant Son. His cry is also the Hebrew title of the prophetic, Psalm 22, which says, in part ...

“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death.” – Psalm 22:14-15 NIV

And, it’s in this moment, just *before* His death, that God’s Kingdom came, through the Ultimate Cupbearer. Betrayal is forged into unmerited grace. Royal wrath has led to our restoration.



... knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips. [And, with His disciples watching from a distance, not comprehending from His glance that He’s saying, “I can now drink it anew, with you,” He took the final drink, and finished the Passover meal, that began in the upper room with the Last Supper] When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” ... – John 19:28-30a NIV

[And His bitter triumph is followed by sweet reunion] Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” When he had said this, he breathed his last. – Luke 23:46 NIV

And fell into a deep, three-day sleep, so that we could wake up, as Isaiah had long ago prophesied.

Awake, awake! Rise up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath, you who have drained to its dregs the goblet that makes men stagger. Of all the sons she bore there was none to guide her; of all the sons she reared there was none to take her by the hand. ... This is what your Sovereign Lord says, your God, who defends his people: “See, I have taken out of your hand the cup that made you stagger; from that cup, the goblet of my wrath, you will never drink again.” – Isaiah 51:17-22 NIV



By entering the cup of wrath, Jesus transformed it into a cup of restored relationship and reunion, the New Covenant in His blood! Joseph was thrown into a cistern. It would’ve been plastered inside. And covered. And, usually filled with water. And when the light entered, it would’ve had a silvery shimmer. A cistern is just a big ol’ cup! And this cup of betrayal that Joseph entered had to be completely free of any trace of moisture.

... and they took him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it. – Genesis 37:24 NIV



That’s because Joseph is an illustration of the Living Water that came to fill the silver cup, only to be poured out, for us. This is why the royal prison under Potiphar’s had to be a *round house*⁶ (a unique Hebrew word, only used to describe this prison)! It was either a converted cistern, or built like one. But, it was a huge, royal ‘cup’ that Joseph, though innocent, entered into, took charge of, and was raised from. Joseph wants his steward to say to his brothers ...

“... This is a wicked thing you have done.” – Genesis 44:5b NIV

And, it’s a brilliantly ironic thing *Joseph* has done. He’s using his silver cup, the trophy of God’s faithfulness, sovereignty, judgment, salvation, and grace, to claim his only innocent brother, by accusing him of what *all the rest* are guilty of. And, you know what *that* is, it’s ... *next week!*

⁶ ... and Joseph’s lord taketh him, and putteth him unto the round-house, a place where the king’s prisoners are bound; and he is there in the round-house. – Genesis 39:20 YLT