

When Dreams Come True

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[0 : 00] So, dreams can be pretty strange. It's exam time now for a lot of us, and one of the dreams I always get at exam time is I wake up in the dream, and I check the time, and I've missed the exam.

It's four o'clock or something, and I'm so frustrated, I wake up in real life, and I go, what do I do? I've got to call them up and ask to re-sit, and then I check the time again, and I realize it's 4 a.m., and I should probably get to sleep.

Now, we have a lot of weird dreams, and I won't go on, because it's boring hearing about other people's dreams. We all have weird dreams, and we all think ours are the weirdest, because we were there, we know what happened.

No one else gets it. Now, the dreams we've seen here in Genesis, especially last week, are a bit different, because they've been given interpretations, and this time, it's going to be no different for Pharaoh.

So, let's have a look at his dream. So, in verse 1 to 7, there are actually two dreams. One is about cows, and the other one is about wheat.

[1 : 10] But they're very similar, so for the sake of time, I'm going to focus on cows today, because they're more delicious. But it's all right. So, there's fat cows, and there's skinny cows, and the skinny cows eat the fat cows, and what's going on?

Pharaoh doesn't know, and in verse 8, you'll see it says, he was troubled. This is a problem. His dream needed an interpretation. He needed one so much, that he called all of the magicians, and all of the wise men, in all of Egypt.

Now, imagine how much it would cost if we had to fly all the doctors, and all the psychologists, all the way up to the lodge in Canberra, because the PM had a nightmare.

This is on that level. So, this is a big problem for Pharaoh, and none of them can solve it. Not one of them was able to give Pharaoh an interpretation.

And just in case we might miss it, Pharaoh, again, will tell Joseph, in verse 15, I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. And, some of you might not be paying attention, so just in case, you'll see later, Pharaoh will make it clear again, in verse 24.

[2 : 25] None of the magicians could explain it to him. Now, this is the point in the story, where Joseph finally shows up. Until now, he's been in jail, since last week, or two weeks ago, actually.

Although, really, it's been two years, as you see in verse 1. Now, looking from verse 9 to 13, we see, the cupbearer has finally remembered the man that interpreted his own dream.

And Pharaoh, who's desperate for understanding, has no other options to turn to than this incarcerated foreign slave on his advice of the cupbearer. So, Joseph is shaved, he's clothed, he's brought before Pharaoh in a real hurry, in verse 14.

Then, even Joseph says he can't help. See, look in verse 16. I cannot do it. That's it. No, of course. Don't worry. Of course, he also says, God will give Pharaoh the answer. So, we don't have to worry about that. But first, Pharaoh's going to repeat the dreams for Joseph to hear.

[3 : 31] And even though we heard them already, the author still repeats them. And this time, he repeats them with Pharaoh's special director's commentary. So, if you look from 17 to 24, you'll see when he's talking about the ugly cows, he's never even seen such ugly cows in all of Egypt.

And then, after the ugly cows eat the plump cows, you couldn't even tell that they had. They were just as ugly and thin as before. This is really bothering Pharaoh. He's thought about it.

And to be honest, I'm on Pharaoh's side. When I eat fatty foods, it's really got a visible effect. Right? You can tell. So, it's a weird dream.

I agree with Pharaoh. No one could interpret his dream. Except, actually, remember Joseph said that God would do it? So, let's move on.

Let's have a look at point two, the interpretation. Now, I hope all of you like repetition. Because the first thing Joseph does is he summarizes the two dreams again by repeating them.

[4 : 38] So, starting looking at verse 25. The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. This is, by the way, why we got away with only looking at the cows. Because they're the same.

But remember, the grain is just as important even if it's not as tasty. So, the seven plump cows are like the seven good heads of grain. And likewise, the seven ugly cows and the seven worthless heads of grain.

And each is seven years. Then Joseph's full interpretation follows from verse 29. Let's read together. There will be seven years of great abundance in Egypt.

But seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten. And the famine will ravage the land. The abundance in the land will not be remembered because the famine that follows it will be so severe.

Now, think back. Some of you might have been here to the huge drought that Australia had in the early 2000s. Some of you might not have been here at the time. It was said to be the worst drought in Australia's history.

[5 : 44] If you were, you might remember the government actually only let us have two minute showers. And you could only wash your car with one bucket of water. Usually it was one you left in the shower to fill up at the time.

We didn't even know. We couldn't remember what rain was. Remember? No. Okay. Okay.

We could. We could remember what rain was. So clearly this is much worse. And Joseph is so sure of this that he's been given an interpretation from God. Because perhaps the most important part of his interpretation is to say that it's not a hypothetical famine.

It's real. And Joseph has wrapped his analysis of the dream with the same explanation three times. First, in verse 25, God has revealed to Pharaoh what he's about to do.

Then likewise, in 28, God has shown Pharaoh what he's about to do. And again, just in case you miss it, in verse 32, the reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God and what?

[6 : 55] And God will do it soon. It sits there three times across the whole thing. Like the bread in a Big Mac. You know the three layers of bread? There you go.

With interpretation in the middle. So, God uses repetition to make his point sure. And just so that we're clear, God uses repetition to make his point sure.

Do you want me to say it again? So, now this isn't even the first time. all of the dreams in this narrative have come in pairs. Joseph had two dreams back in chapter 37 and the two dreams of the servants last week, there were two of them.

And now, these are Pharaoh's two dreams. Two of them, back to back, as you can see. And then, along with these pairs, you'll find a lot of threes in this story.

And the threes here show some kind of completeness. So, this is the third set of dreams in the narrative and it's the most important. The dreams in this story are repeated three times, as we saw.

[8 : 04] And the third time comes with an interpretation. We'll also see a couple of more of these threes, so look out for them. So, with this, Joseph assures that the matter has been firmly decided.

The dream that no one understands, only God can reveal what he'll do. And really, only God can bring this abundance and the famine that he's promised. The magicians can't even understand the dream.

So, neither can their gods do anything about the crisis. So, what should Pharaoh do? Well, after Joseph's revealed God's plan to Pharaoh, we see Joseph, in his wisdom, has offered his own 14-year economic plan.

Let's read together from 33. Now, let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance.

They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh to be kept in the cities for food. This food should be held in reserve for the country to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt so that the country may not be ruined by the famine.

[9 : 25] And, Pharaoh agrees. We see that in 37. The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. So, Pharaoh asked them, Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the Spirit of God?

Pharaoh actually has agreed that Joseph's plan is good, but he's also realized that not anyone should be chosen for this task. His own magicians and wise men have been pretty useless until now, even in terms of talking about the dream.

So, even Pharaoh, a pagan, and actually one who's considered kind of a god in Egypt, has recognized that the one who he chooses ought to have the Spirit of God.

And, once again, God has shown his peerlessness even to this pagan king, to Pharaoh. Therefore, he really only has one choice, right?

It's got to be Joseph. So, let's actually see this from 39. Then, Pharaoh said to Joseph, Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one discerning and wise as you.

[10 : 34] You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you. Do you see his reason?

It's at the beginning there. Since God has made all this known to you, this is why Pharaoh finds Joseph wise and discerning. This is why Pharaoh can trust Joseph and put him in charge, because of God.

So, Pharaoh said to Joseph, we'll keep reading, I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt. Then, Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger.

He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain on his neck. He had him ride in his chariot, a second in command, and the people shouted before him, make way. Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, I am Pharaoh, but without your word, no one will lift a hand or foot in all Egypt. Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zephanath-Paneah, and he gave him Asenath, daughter of Potiphar, priest of On, to be his wife.

[11 : 38] And Joseph went throughout the land of Egypt. Now, if you caught it, or maybe if you didn't, this is the third robe that's mentioned in the Joseph narrative. And it's also the third time Joseph was put in charge of somewhere, this time of the whole country.

So, with this, Pharaoh's done what he said, and he's put Joseph in charge of the whole land of Egypt. He gives him a new name, and he gives him a wife, so he can have his own family.

Things are looking pretty good for Joseph, but what about the dream? What about the famine? Those are the things that only God could do, not Pharaoh. So, let's keep going.

Let's keep reading and look at the third point on your outline, the fulfillment. So, we're reading now from 46. Joseph was 30 years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

And Joseph went out from Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout Egypt. During the seven years of abundance, the land produced plentifully. Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt, and he stored it in the cities.

[12 : 48] In each city, he put food grown in the fields surrounding it. Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea. It was so much, he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.

He's 30 now, as we see, so it's been 13 years since the story started. And now he's second in all of Egypt. We see also that God has made good on the seven years of abundance from the dream. And likewise, Joseph is working diligently at storing it. There's so much food, he can't even keep record. And the grain is like the sand of the sea.

When I read that, it actually reminds me of this. I don't know, I don't know if any of you are, or if some of you might not be old enough.

It's the old man duck with all his money. It's like a money swimming pool. Anyway, we'll move on. Alright, don't worry. You don't know. That's just what I thought.

[13 : 53] So, God's begun the fulfillment. We've started with abundance and it's looked good. Then what about the other seven years? Let's keep going. Looking at 53. The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end and the seven years of famine began.

Just as Joseph had said, there was famine in all the other lands but in the land of Egypt there was food. When all Egypt began to feel the famine the people cried to Pharaoh for food.

Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians go to Joseph do what he tells you. Yeah. Just as we saw God's dream for Pharaoh was not an empty promise and the understanding that he gave to Joseph is also

shown to be sound.

The famine has come just as he said. But, thanks to his warning Egypt is ready. Go to Joseph says Pharaoh do what he tells you.

Then we'll keep reading. From 56. When the famine had spread over the whole country Joseph opened the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians for the famine was severe throughout Egypt and all the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph because the famine was severe everywhere.

[15:06] Thanks to Joseph the Egyptians can buy grain to eat. In fact, the whole world came to him as it was in 57. The famine was severe everywhere. So, through Joseph the person God chooses to bring into Egypt 13 years ago the whole world can now be saved.

This might maybe even include his family who are back in Canaan and if they're saved God would be keeping his promises to Abraham but you'll have to come back next week to find out about them. The whole way through we've seen God the only one who could do this or do that the only one who could send dreams or send understanding who gives abundance and who takes it away and now God has given salvation through Joseph salvation to Joseph himself to Pharaoh and to the whole world God has even blessed Joseph quite a lot apart from being saved from the famine he's now number two in the whole world well in Egypt at least and people from the whole world are coming to him for food God has blessed him with a wife and with kids and we see that Joseph has recognized God doing all of this even if we just look at their names he calls the older one Manasseh because God has made him forget all his trouble and his father's household and the younger one he calls Ephraim because God has made him fruitful in the land of his suffering because God has made him forget about the troubles of the past

God has made him fruitful out of his suffering Joseph continues to recognize God as the source of these blessings now Joseph was a special agent chosen by God to bring salvation in that time and in that place and we're not in Egypt so what's the point well I think there's a particular person Joseph might be pointing us towards you can guess if you like there's a lot of things here they all just seem to line up maybe if it was just one it wouldn't mean anything at all but there's almost too much to ignore I've got some on a slide so we'll look through them quickly if we look at 38 and 39 Pharaoh says that Joseph has the spirit of God and it reminds us of Matthew 3.16 which is up there as soon as Jesus was baptized he went up out of the water at that moment heaven was opened and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him fair enough then what about verse 46

Joseph is 30 years old does that remind you of someone if we look at Luke 3.23 it says now Jesus himself was about 30 years old when he began his ministry also if we look at 55 the people came to Pharaoh for food and he says go to Joseph do what he tells you much like in John 2.5 where at a particular wedding you might remember the people are looking for wine and Jesus' mother says to the servants do whatever he tells you I did say they were small but there's a lot of them and there's clearly something much bigger it's salvation for the whole world Jesus also came to save and in a much greater way than Joseph so Joseph is like a shadow or like a sample or a demo disc if anyone remembers he points us to Jesus who doesn't just save us from a famine which only lasts seven years but from sin which tempts us and trips us up for our whole lives and from death and hell which lasts even longer forever like Joseph was in Egypt

[19:11] Jesus is God's chosen agent for salvation but for the whole world and thank God for that anyone else would be like those useless magicians who couldn't do anything there's another major similarity though in this part of the story two weeks ago we saw in Potiphar's house Joseph was tempted like Jesus and how he was punished unfairly for doing good like Jesus but in this chapter Joseph is finally brought out of prison he's clothed he's given a robe and a ring and a gold chain and the people shout make way or bow or kneel in some translations it's much like Jesus as we see in our second reading that was from Philippians so we'll read from verse 5 and it'll be up there he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death even death on a cross therefore

God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father just like Joseph was made fruitful finally from his suffering and he was exalted in the land of Egypt Jesus has been

raised up from the dead and exalted to the highest place in the kingdom of God for us who don't live in Egypt 4,000 years ago for me at least you can work that one out for yourselves Joseph isn't the one who saves us but Jesus is that chosen person through whom we receive salvation that only God can bring then what does that mean so look down to dreams to promises for Joseph Pharaoh's dream revealed God's plan of salvation but for us

God's word and his promises in his word reveal his plan of salvation it's just like we read in Hebrews in chapter 1 1 and 2 in the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways including dreams but in these last days he's spoken to us by his son we no longer need weird dreams about plump and ugly cows or wheat or whatever because we have the promises of Jesus recorded in his word in the Bible and just as we saw with the dreams with all their repetition God makes his point sure he does what he says just as we saw the seven years of abundance and then the seven years of famine God follows through he kept to his word therefore we can know that God's promises in Jesus are sure that he will keep them we even know he's already sent

Jesus who died to offer salvation to the whole world so we can see that he's already began keeping his promises to us if you don't yet know this salvation or you don't trust in Jesus for forgiveness the story that we've read today that we've seen in Joseph's life should show you how God desires to save that he's powerful enough to keep his promises in Jesus so if you're still not sure then feel free to talk to me or to Mark or to anyone here about it more but what about for us who already follow Jesus what do we learn I'm sure we're aware yeah we know we can trust God's promises we can trust the Bible but do we live like that do we live knowing that God fully reveals his plan of salvation in the world that God's word tells us everything we need to know to know him and to be forgiven do we believe that or do we get caught up in superstitions and fads and things do we wish actually God should give us crazy dreams instead of reading the Bible because that's too hard sometimes it'd be easier if God just told me what to do if he spoke to me out loud and I could hear him or maybe if he doesn't do that I can ask a friend my friend will tell me everything I want to hear instead can I even trust my own dreams do we start to maybe get caught up in those kind of things in my own experience in the past a long time ago there was a and at one point he tried it was a thing at the time it's probably you might have heard of it let's close our eyes and see what God is telling to us I don't really see anything sometimes it was unsettling I don't know what am I supposed to think about are they just my thoughts for some people they can just believe everything and get carried away

[24 : 31] I didn't know so it's easy to start accusing yourself and just making yourself feel bad when we're supposed to be encouraging each other and ultimately I just didn't have any idea I don't know if some of you have maybe encountered that kind of thing but there's a better way there's a better way because there's a real peace in knowing that God's sufficient word is all written down for us there's peace we can open it up and read it and we know that we can trust God with his promises it's just good we all know that there will be hard times I'm still young and even I have some idea but like I know for some of you you know that even better than I do some of you have experienced all kinds of things in life and we know that but we can know that for the famines and the worries and the suffering that would last for seven years for 77 years we know what

God has promised his love his forgiveness and eventually our promotion to glory so don't look to dreams and signs and useless things and get worried over them look to God's son in his word and his promises just as he promised the famine to Egypt and also saved promises us forgiveness for sin eternal life and he saves us through Jesus it's time to forget about dreams God's promises come true let me pray Lord our father thank you for your salvation that you offer the whole world thank you for sending Jesus to purchase us for forgiveness redemption and salvation in his name and thank you for revealing this to us in your word please help us find our trust in you through your sufficient word to us and help us find hope in your sure promises in Jesus name Amen