

God's dreams come true

- Genesis 41:1-41
- We have come to the turning point in Joseph's story. It's 13 years or so and he has gone from brothers' and father's disbelief to God's fulfillment of a teenager's dream. Jacob and the brothers won't be on the scene for several more years, and that is when Joseph will fully understand all that God has taken him through to put him exactly where he is. He will weep as he says to his brothers when they are begging for his forgiveness, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive." God's dreams, given to Joseph, are coming true. But as we've said before and I emphasized with the children today, our life is not about closing our eyes and hoping, maybe even believing, that all of *our* dreams will one day come true. Our life is about God and about day by day growing, as Peter wrote, "in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." And you know what happens as we are pursuing him in that way? He makes *his* dreams, or better, his desires and his plans for us to come true.
- Let's look at this passage today under three points: Dreams, Interpretation, and Promotion.
- **Dreams (verses 1-14)**
- Pharaoh has two dreams and in the first he was standing by the Nile and in the second he was standing next to a wheat field. Seven fat cows come out of the Nile, where they were probably standing for relief from the heat and the bugs because it was, what? Hot as Egypt. But right behind the seven fat cows come seven skinny and ugly cows and they eat the fat ones. But, as he would tell Joseph later, when they ate the fat cows, the skinny cows were still skinny. And ugly! In the second dream seven ears of grain are blowing in the breeze, fat and happy, when seven skinny ears, come along and they are nasty looking, blighted by the blistering desert wind. And they throw down on the seven plump ears, licking their glutenous chops and belching happily.
- When the Pharaoh woke up, he was deeply troubled in his spirit and probably keeping one eye peeled for any maniacal cows coming through his bedroom door. He doesn't know what in the world this dream could possibly mean, but he understands that it means something. God was not going to let him miss that. So the Pharaoh calls for the people he would consult on such matters: the magicians and the wise men. The word Moses used here referred to people who were experts in Egypt in handling spells and using magic and, in this case, studying the volumes of literature available on dreams. It's interesting to me that more than 400 years later, another Pharaoh would summon his magicians to the banks of the same Nile river that Moses and Aaron had just turned to blood.
- But for this Pharaoh, the magicians and the wise men had no answer to him about his dreams. I love the last part of verse 8: "But there was none who could interpret them to Pharaoh." Now, saints, don't miss this. The Pharaohs of Egypt were considered the mediator between the people and the gods when they were alive. When the Pharaohs died, they were worshiped as gods themselves who had now become divine and had passed on their sacred powers to the new Pharaoh, their son. So? Well, here is this Pharaoh who has a direct line to the gods of Egypt, but he cannot understand his dream, and neither can his dream experts. Only one can interpret it, the one who has, as the Pharaoh will proclaim later, the "Spirit of God" in him. Kings and rulers and governors and congresses and houses of Parliament cannot understand the sovereignty of God over all the affairs of his creation. Only those who have the Spirit of God and to whom he reveals his plans and purposes.
- This is when the cupbearer suddenly wakes up from his own two-year-long dream and remembers the prisoner that gave him hope. He says to Pharaoh, "I remember my offenses today." He tells Pharaoh everything that had happened and that this young Hebrew, doesn't even know his name, interpreted his dream and the chief baker's dreams as well. "And as he interpreted to us, so it came about." The Pharaoh sent his servants to go fetch the young man.
- Don't miss the language here in verse 14. "They quickly brought him out of the pit (or, dungeon)." Joseph hasn't been relaxing by the pool at ClubMed. He hasn't been staying at one of those "Pay to

Stay” jails that I read about this week in California. “Starting at \$25 and going up to \$251 a night, the program allows certain inmates to move into a ‘less intimidating environment,’ as one jail in Santa Ana advertises on its website. The conditions differ from an eight-person dorm to one cell with two beds, a television, a phone and a separate refrigerator.” (Insider Magazine) A phone and a TV? Joseph didn’t even have a toilet in the pit that was his home for two years.

- Joseph was brought out and immediately got himself a shave, probably a bath, and a change of clothes. He had been in Egypt for 13 years or so and had learned the language and the customs. You don’t stand before the Pharaoh with a beard and ratty clothes. That leads us to...
- **Interpretation (verses 17-36)**
- The Pharaoh greets this young Hebrew stranger, fresh out of prison, with high praise, and notice three times he says “you.” “I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.” Joseph’s response was not to shrug and say, “Well, you know, some guys got it, and some don’t.” No. He corrects the Pharaoh, a dangerous thing to do. “**It is not in me,**” he says, and that phrase is a single word in Hebrew! *NO! It is not I who can interpret dreams.* We see the humility of Joseph here, and that humility rests upon his great faith in Almighty God and produces courage. Joseph is not afraid to speak the truth to a man who had authority, but not ultimate authority, over his life. I am reminded of Proverbs 28:1, “The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion.”
- Then Joseph says something else that could have meant the end of his life. He mentions God, big G, to god, little g. And he says with a word of assurance that could only have come from the Holy Spirit, since he has no idea what the dreams are yet, “God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.”
- The Pharaoh repeats the dreams he has already told to his own magicians and then repeats that his own magicians were unable to interpret them. Joseph was able to interpret by the Spirit of God, to whom nothing is hidden. “The dreams,” Joseph begins, “are one.” You dreamed two dreams, Big P, but they both have the same meaning. And this is it. God is giving you a heads up on what he is about to do. Joseph proceeds to tell Big P that there will be 7 years of plenty followed by 7 years of famine, and that the future economy of the greatest nation in the world is in the hands of almighty God. Big G. And you dreamed basically the same dream twice, Pharaoh, because it is fixed. It is established by God. Walter Breuggemann wrote, “The dreams took the initiative away from Pharaoh; he was not the subject, but the object, receiving the messages and not generating them.” Translation? The Pharaoh was not in charge; he just thought he was.
- Listen, Saints. No matter how powerful and how prosperous a nation or kingdom on the earth becomes, that nation and that kingdom is absolutely and totally under the control of the sovereign God, the one who created the universe. And we as believers can and should rejoice in that.
- Joseph went on to suggest a proposal to the Pharaoh as to how he should prepare for the famine. This famine is not described as a judgment, but just “one of life’s irregularities, and Joseph points out that a wise manager will insure against them, taking extra measures if he can see extra hazards.” (Derek Kidner) And Joseph, wise beyond his years because of his faith under trial, and led by the Spirit of God, gives the Pharaoh a masterful plan that will save the nation and, in many ways, the world. He tells him to appoint overseers who will lead a national savings plan, building up a surplus during the feast years to provide for the needs in the famine years. Save 20%, Joseph says, and store the grain in the cities. It was a centrally controlled plan with a regionally-controlled application. The wise manager will lead the team of competent overseers and the surplus grain would be stored in different locations all over the country so that the people who lived in those areas could buy or trade for what they needed. Save for future times of distress. This is wisdom from God for individuals. “Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest.” (Proverbs 6:6-8) The majority of Americans live from paycheck to paycheck and spend more than they make. When tragedies or trials come, they have to depend on others for their provision. Save and give. This wisdom is also for churches. In 2019, “The average debt for megachurches was more than \$9.1 million compared to only \$111,600 for the

handful of very small churches with debt. It's interesting to note, however, that megachurches and very small churches have similar levels of debt per worship attendee (\$2,021 for 5800 members and \$1,800 for 62 members).” -Christian Standard Magazine

- **Promotion (verses 37-41)**

- I love Pharaoh’s question to his servants in verse 38. “Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?” The Pharaoh recognizes God’s existence and his presence in the Hebrew prisoner. Then he acknowledges God to the prisoner himself, saying to Joseph, “Since God has shown you all this, there is none so wise and discerning as you are.” Unthinkable for a Pharaoh, a little-god himself, to humble himself in such a way and acknowledge that a Hebrew, a *Hebrew* of all people, understood more than he did. How did Pharaoh come to this knowledge? The same way Caiaphas was able to say about Jesus years later, “It is better for you (chief priests and Pharisees) that one man should die for his people.” Both men came to their knowledge by the power of God working in them in spite of their unbelief.
- Joseph was made the “vizier” of Egypt, or the “grand steward of all Egypt,” according to a document found in an ancient Egyptian tomb. Pharaoh says the same thing to Joseph that Potiphar and the captain of the guard in prison had said to him. You shall be in charge of *everything*, over my house and over all my people and only when it comes to the throne will I be greater than you.
- What can we take away from this truth from God’s Word?
- 1- Nations rise and fall and cannot understand the purposes of God over the affairs of men and women.
- 2- God uses his people to explain his purposes even to nations and kingdoms, and in every sphere of influence in which he places us.
- 3- We can trust God to give us the wisdom we need when we are in a position to represent him in the world.
- Prayer
- Greet One Another