

Joseph(3)

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Joseph in Egypt—From Prisoner to Pharaoh's Second in Command

While Joseph was in prison, which was under the charge of the captain of the Pharaoh's guard (presumably still Potiphar), two officials—the chief cupbearer (butler) and the chief baker—of the king (Pharaoh) of Egypt offended Pharaoh in some way and were put in the same prison as Joseph. The captain of the guard put Joseph in charge of the two officials (Genesis 40:1-4). Both of these men had a dream on the same night; they were different dreams and they did not understand how to interpret them. Joseph acknowledged that all interpretations belong to God, and proceeded to interpret each dream; therefore, God was working through Joseph. Joseph's interpretations were fulfilled exactly as he said, which was favorable for the butler but not for the baker (Genesis 40:5-23).

Two years later, while Joseph was still in prison, the Pharaoh became troubled by two dreams that he did not understand. He called in all the magicians and wise men of Egypt, but none of them could interpret the dreams (Genesis 41:1-8). The chief butler spoke to Pharaoh about Joseph and how he had correctly interpreted his and the chief baker's dreams. Pharaoh called in Joseph who, again, acknowledged that only God could interpret his dreams (Genesis 41:9-16).

Pharaoh described both dreams to Joseph, and Joseph interpreted them as meaning that a great famine lasting seven years would follow seven years of (agricultural) abundance, and that God would make it happen soon. Joseph then provided a plan for Pharaoh to mitigate the consequences of the famine so that the land of Egypt would not perish. The plan included putting a man in charge over the land of Egypt who would ensure that portions of food during the years of abundance would be stored for use during the famine. This proposal seemed good to Pharaoh. (Genesis 41:17-37).

Pharaoh recognized that God (Joseph's God) had enabled Joseph to interpret his dreams, so he put Joseph in charge of everything in the land of Egypt except Pharaoh's authority as king. Furthermore, Pharaoh gave Joseph a wife, whose name was Asenath. Joseph was 30 years old at the time he took charge of Egypt, and he put in place the plan to store grain in all the cities during the seven years of abundance (Genesis 41:38-49).

Takeaway—Dreams and Interpretations

Joseph interpreted dreams, and in each case specifically stated that only God could provide the interpretation. This was a humble acknowledgment that Joseph was unable to interpret them through his own abilities and, I believe, confirmed that the dreams were provided by God. Daniel also interpreted the dreams of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Daniel chapters 2 and 4). To my knowledge, these are the only instances recorded in Scripture where a man interpreted the dreams of other men. It is interesting that the dreams of Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, both mighty leaders of their day yet unsaved men who worshiped other gods, concerned prophetic events determined by God;¹ therefore, only a chosen man of God could interpret the dreams.

Does anyone have the ability to interpret divinely inspired dreams today? More importantly, does God speak to us through dreams, visions, or angels today? I strongly believe that He doesn't. The word of

¹ In both cases, the interpretations of both Joseph and Daniel were soon fulfilled or began to be fulfilled.

God is complete and no prophetic revelations or utterances are needed for this dispensation of grace. He has spoken to us through His word (II Timothy 3:16-17) and somehow works on our conscience or sub-conscience through His Holy Spirit. That is, He opens our minds to understand what He has already revealed (I Corinthians 2:11-16; Ephesians 1:15-21; Acts 16:14). It is true that Paul received the revelation of the mystery and the gospel of the grace of God from Christ (Galatians 1:1, 11-12; II Corinthians 12:1-7; Ephesians 3:1-12; Romans 16:25-27), but those revelations completed the word of God to us (Colossians 1:25-27). Nothing new about this dispensation of grace has been revealed since then. We are to be wary of false teachers today and those who claim to receive dreams or visions from God (Philippians 3:2; I Timothy 6:3-5; II Timothy 4:3-4).

Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.² Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize [salvation and completeness in Christ] by delighting in self-abasement [false humility] and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has [i.e., claims to have] seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the head [Christ], from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligament, grows with a growth which is from God. (Colossians 2:16-19)

It is possible, perhaps likely, that God will reveal things to His people through dreams, visions, and angels concerning the fulfillment of prophetic events (e.g., as did the angel to Joseph about Mary [through a dream], the angels at the resurrection, the angels at the ascension of Jesus, and the angel to John resulting in the book of Revelation) between the rapture and Christ's second coming to earth (see Acts 2:17-18). I am always skeptical and concerned, however, when someone says that God, Jesus, or an angel told them such and such through a dream, vision, or *a little whisper* in their ear. I believe that it is a figment of their imagination (Colossians 2:18)—something they want to believe, or just plain lying to give themselves a feeling of self-importance, to draw people away from the truth, or to fool others for financial gain (just as unrighteous men will do in the prophetic last days—Zechariah 10:2; Matthew 24:23-24; Jude 4-19).

² This sentence is saying that no one has the right to judge us—members of the body of Christ—according to the requirements (or perceived requirements) of the Law of Moses because the Law has been set aside (i.e., taken away by God). It was nailed to the cross with Christ (Colossians 2:13-14). The righteousness of the Law was imputed to us because of Christ's righteousness (Romans 3:21-26; 4:4-5; 5:18-21; 8:1-4, 9-11).