

Joseph, Interpreter of Dreams

Do you remember that Joseph's name means add? Everything he did prospered. Everything he did went well and pleased his masters. That's because the Lord was with him and made his work to flourish. Even in the dark, dismal jail Joseph was promoted with added responsibilities. The jail warden gave him the task of looking after the other prisoners. He saw that they had food and water and that they were safe. Joseph cared for the other prisoners as if they were his own people. He cheered them up when they were sad and helped them to have hope. The jail keeper must have liked having Joseph work in the jail for it made his life a whole lot easier.

As Joseph looked around the jail one day, he noticed that two prisoners were very sad. They were Pharaoh's butler and Pharaoh's baker. Pharaoh had become angry with them and sent them to prison, so they were placed under Joseph's care. To encourage them, Joseph asked them why they were sad. They answered that they had both been given terrible dreams. And no one could explain the meaning of their dreams. Joseph said, Tell your dreams to me, for do not dreams belong to God. The butler explained to Joseph that he saw in his dream that a vine was in front of him, and the vine had three branches. Blossoms shot forth from the branches and they produced bunches of ripe grapes. He also saw in his dream that he pressed the grapes into Pharaoh's cup and gave it into his hand.

Without any hesitation Joseph interpreted the butler's dream. He said that in three days Pharaoh would send for him and restore him to his work as his personal butler. This was so exciting for the butler, and Joseph made the butler promise that he would not forget him sweating and suffering in the prison wrongfully, for he had done no wrong.

Hearing the good news of the butler's happy future, the baker proceeded to tell his dream to Joseph. In his dream he saw three white baskets on his head. In the baskets were fancy cakes and sweet things for Pharaoh to eat, but the birds came down and ate them while they were on his head.

Again, Joseph immediately began to interpret the baker's dream. He said the three baskets were three days and that in three days Pharaoh will hang you from a tree and the birds shall eat at your dead body. After hearing of his own future death, the poor baker became sick with fear. And sure-enough, Joseph's interpretations of the dreams came true, for three days later Pharaoh was celebrating his birthday with a feast unto all his servants. On that third day the butler was restored to Pharaoh's house to serve the King as before, but the poor baker was taken out to a tree, a rope was placed around his neck, and he was dropped down so that he died at the end of a rope.

You would think that these things were unforgettable, and that the butler would remember Joseph for his kindness and think of him still suffering in that jail day and night, and all for nothing, for Joseph had done no wrong. Yet, for two whole years the butler forgot all about Joseph, and thus never did a thing to help him. So for two long years Joseph had no one who cared for him. But that was not totally true, because God

cared for Joseph. God did not forget him. He was still God's child and God's servant to fulfill God's purposes in Egypt for the good of Israel.

There are several things that God cannot do. He cannot sin, He cannot lie and he cannot forget. God promises that we are as the apple of His eye. Try poking your eye with a stick and you will automatically protect your eye. That is how God cares for His children, and how He cares even for you.

As it happened, at the end of two years Pharaoh had two mind boggling dreams. He was filled with fear and frustration for he had no idea what his dream meant. In his dream he saw seven fat cattle come up out of the river and feed in a meadow, which had plenty of grass. Then seven thin cattle came up out of the river and ate up the fat cattle, but they became no fatter. They were still lean and skinny.

Then Pharaoh had a second dream in which seven ears of corn came up on one stalk. They had full ears of corn that would provide good food. Then came along seven thin ears of corn that looked sickly and dried out by the hot winds from the east. They were no good, but they ate up the good corn. At that Pharaoh awoke from his dream and was going crazy to know what all these odd dreams meant. In a hot temper he sent for the magicians and the wise men of Egypt, but none of them could interpret Pharaoh's dreams. It remained a dark mystery. Pharaoh was about to blow his top with frustration for he fearful and anxious, but was getting no answers.

It was then, in that hour of panic in all of Pharaoh's house, that the butler remembered Joseph. He informed Pharaoh about the time he had been cast into prison and how he met a young Hebrew man called Joseph who interpreted his dream before he was released from prison and restored to Pharaoh's house. In desperation Pharaoh sent for Joseph, who was told to change from his filthy prison clothes and prepare to stand before the King of all Egypt, which he did.

Before long Pharaoh was retelling his dreams to Joseph about the seven fat cattle eaten by the thin cattle and how the seven fat ears of corn were eaten by the thin ones. Pharaoh called on Joseph to use his powers of interpretation to tell him the meaning. Joseph wisely stated that the interpretation of dreams did not belong to him. **"God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."**

At this point of the story, take note that Joseph was humble. He did not pretend to know everything. He wanted to honour His God in this situation and to depend upon God to reveal the meaning to him, and he also honoured Pharaoh stating that God had shown unto him what was going to happen in Egypt.

Joseph stated that God was warning Pharaoh that there would be seven years of plentiful harvests, followed by another seven years of failed harvests. In the first years there would be bumper crops and that was the time to fill all the barns with corn. But, Joseph went on to state, those seven good years will be followed with seven years of terrible famine, when nothing will grow due to lack of rain and destructive hot winds. The whole land of Egypt would be as a desert. In Joseph's mind there was no doubt

about the reality of what was to come for he told Pharaoh God had given him two dreams to show him that the famine was certain to come.

Joseph insisted that Pharaoh must act quickly to see that food was stored up in the good years when there would be plenty of corn, so that there would be no hunger in the bad years. He said that Pharaoh should appoint a man to oversee the work and have officers to go throughout the land to insist that all Egyptians worked hard and store up lots of food during the first seven years.

Pharaoh's face lightened up with hope and his advisers were also relieved that they not only understood the meaning of the dreams, but they also knew what to do. Pharaoh grew confident in what he must do and immediately asked where he might find such a man to oversee the work of storing up food for seven years. No man came to mind at first. Then Pharaoh looked at Joseph. I know, he said. You Joseph, to whom was given the interpretation of these dreams, you will be that man. I will appoint you to this important work. The bible clearly states that Pharaoh said, "Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto my word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou."

And so, Joseph came to be the prime minister, or ruler, over all Egypt. Pharaoh put his ring on Joseph's hand, he put a gold chain about his neck and had him ride in Pharaoh's second chariot throughout the land, while the people cried, "Bow the knee."

In that scene of Joseph being raised up to such high honour in Egypt, Joseph was like our Lord Jesus who was raised up from his years of humiliation and death to be given a name above every name to whom every knee should bow. To be saved from sin's curse, sinners must go to the Lord Jesus for mercy, confess their sins unto Him and ask Him for the gift of salvation. Jesus is our Joseph.