

Joseph Interpreted the Dreams of Pharaoh

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others that the Word of God does have answers for those who are troubled and distressed. In this topic, we will see that Joseph interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh that had caused him to become troubled.

Genesis 41:25-32 says, “Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, ‘The dreams of Pharaoh *are* one; God has shown Pharaoh what He *is* about to do: The seven good cows *are* seven years, and the seven good heads *are* seven years; the dreams *are* one. And the seven thin and ugly cows which came up after them *are* seven years, and the seven empty heads blighted by the east wind are seven years of famine. This *is* the thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh. God has shown Pharaoh what He *is* about to do. Indeed seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt; but after them seven years of famine will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land. So the plenty will not be known in the land because of the famine following, for it *will be* very severe. And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing *is* established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.’” Here, we see that Joseph explained to Pharaoh the meaning of his dreams.

Joseph had promised Pharaoh that God would give him an answer of peace. We see that Joseph began his answer by giving all praise to the Lord. Joseph said that both of the dreams of Pharaoh actually had the same interpretation. Joseph said that what God had done in those dreams was to show Pharaoh what was going to happen in the land of Egypt over the next fourteen years. The fact that Pharaoh had dreamed about seven good cows and seven good heads of grain was the way God had chosen to show Pharaoh that the next seven years would be very good years with plenty of crops that would produce a lot of food for the land of Egypt. In fact, those years would be so good that there would be much more food than the people would be able to eat.

Then, Joseph went on to explain that God had used the seven ugly cows and the seven blighted heads of grain to show Pharaoh that the seven very good years of crops would be followed by seven years of famine, in which very little food would grow. Those seven years of famine would be so bad that the people would forget all about the seven years they had enjoyed wonderful crops. In fact, the food in the land would be totally depleted by the famine. The famine would be so severe the people would forget about the previous seven years when they had plenty of food.

Then, Joseph explained why God had given Pharaoh two dreams, even though they both pointed to the same events. Joseph told Pharaoh that God had given Pharaoh both dreams to let him know that God would surely cause these things to come to pass. Daniel made a

similar statement in Daniel 2:45, where we read, “Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.” In this dream, we see that Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar his dream would certainly come to pass. God chose to speak to both rulers, through a dream, and then revealed the interpretation to a godly person who could explain what God was going to do in the future. God can choose to work in any way that He desires to make His will known.

However, Joseph did not stop once he had explained the meaning of Pharaoh’s dreams to him. Genesis 41:33-36 says, “Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh do *this*, and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect one-fifth *of the produce* of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years. And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. Then that food shall be as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt, that the land may not perish during the famine.” Here, we see that Joseph also suggested a plan of action to Pharaoh so that he, and the entire land of Egypt, could prepare for the famine during the seven years of large harvests.

Joseph suggested to Pharaoh that he select a discerning and wise man to set over the land of Egypt. The word translated “discerning” means to *understand, have insight or have discernment*. It involves more than just gathering information and includes the thought of knowing how to use the knowledge that one has. This same word is used by Pharaoh just a few verses later, as Genesis 41:39 says, “Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, *there is* no one as discerning and wise as you.’” Here, we see that Pharaoh recognized that God was the One who had given Joseph this discernment. Joseph then showed this discernment by suggesting that Pharaoh also have this man appoint officers to collect one-fifth of the food grown during the seven plentiful years, so that Egypt would have adequate food to last through the seven years of famine.

Joseph went on to suggest that Pharaoh give instructions for these officers to gather food during the good years and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh. Joseph suggested that this food be stored in the cities. This was important because the cities would be the first places to lack food. If the food was not already stored in the cities, the people living in the cities could have quickly faced starvation. In that day, it was difficult to move large amounts of food from one region of the country to another quickly. However, if the food was stored in cities throughout the land, then each city would already have food in the city prior to the beginning of the famine.

Joseph said that the food stored in the cities would be a reserve for the entire land when the time of the famine came. One of the things we will see is the fact that even though the people knew that food was being gathered for the famine, they did not prepare for the famine themselves. Genesis 41:55 says, “So when all the land of Egypt was famished,

the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, ‘Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do.’” People in the time of Joseph were just like the people today. Most of the people did not prepare for the famine during the years of plenty. Their crops were so plentiful that the one-fifth gathered during the years of plenty meant that one-fifth of the food would be enough to feed the people for the seven years of famine. However, most of the people did not prepare for the famine by saving part of the four-fifths that they had left for the famine.

Genesis 41:37-39 says, “So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants. And Pharaoh said to his servants, ‘Can we find *such a one* as this, a man in whom *is* the Spirit of God?’ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, *there is* no one as discerning and wise as you.’” Joseph was only thirty years of age at the time he gave this advice but both Pharaoh and all of his servants recognized that it was good advice. This is a reminder that godly young men can be used greatly by the Lord if they seek the guidance of the Lord and share with others the principles taught by the Word of God. However, Pharaoh and his servants recognized that this was more than just good advice.

Pharaoh recognized that Joseph had the Spirit of God in him. He told his servants that he did not know of anyone else in whom he could find the Spirit of God. The fact that Joseph gave the honor to God for interpreting the dreams of Pharaoh was about to have a huge impact on the land of Egypt. This is a reminder that even those who are not followers of the Lord can recognize that the Lord is guiding a person when that person has their total dependence on the Lord. Joseph had been sold as a slave by his brothers. Then, he had faced temptation in the house of Potiphar. After that, he experienced several years in prison. Through these experiences, Joseph had learned that he could trust the Lord in each situation. Now, the results of that trust were recognized by Pharaoh and all of his servants.

Then, Pharaoh spoke to Joseph again. He realized that God had shown him the meaning of his dreams through Joseph. Pharaoh told Joseph that no one else had shown that kind of discernment. We saw that discernment involves more than just gathering information and includes the thought of knowing how to use the knowledge one has. Pharaoh realized that Joseph had done much more than just interpret his dreams. He realized that God had also given Joseph discernment to tell him how to prepare for the famine during the seven years of plenty. The Lord had given Joseph the discernment needed to preserve the lives of many people in Egypt. Many years later, Joseph told his brothers, in Genesis 50:19-20, “Do not be afraid, for *am* I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive.” Truly, the Lord worked through the faithfulness of Joseph.

Pharaoh also recognized that Joseph was a man of great wisdom. The word translated “wise” here speaks of *practical advice based on revelation from God as well as from his experience and what he had observed*. Joseph had certainly provided practical advice to

Pharaoh based on the things the Lord had told Joseph about the dreams of Pharaoh. The Lord also led him through the experience he had gained as the servant over the household of Potiphar as well as his experience serving others in the prison for several years. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn, from the example of Joseph, how to become a person with both discernment and wisdom so they can have a real impact on the lives of those to whom the Lord gives them the opportunity to serve. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to grow in discernment and wisdom.