

Genesis 41: Prison to Palace

This chapter sees Joseph go from a prison cell to being second in command in the mighty Egyptian empire. These events took place around 1900 BC in the middle Kingdom period of Egyptian history - some 600 years after the Great Pyramid was built and 600 years before Tutankhamen. During this period Egypt saw a time of prosperity and stability and a resurgence of art, literature and monumental building projects.

Two questions to think about throughout this study: What does this chapter show of God's plan's for Joseph's life? And how does it fit in with the bigger picture of God's plans of salvation for his people?

Pharaoh's Dreams

In the ancient Near East dreams were seen as an instrument of divine revelation - Pharaohs would even sleep in temples seeking dreams.

God gives Pharaoh two similar dreams to make the message clear.

Pharaoh assumes that Joseph is an expert in interpreting dreams. How does Joseph respond to this?

Why should Pharaoh believe a foreigner and his foreign God? Is this further evidence of God working out his sovereign plans?

The message God gave to Pharaoh in his dream was for a specific time and purpose. However the underlying message of Pharaoh's dreams - putting something aside during the good years - is wise advice at any time. (Proverbs 21:20) Or is it contradicted (or superseded) by Jesus' command in the Sermon on the Mount not to store up treasures on earth? Matt 6:19, 26.

Other Dreams in the Bible

Dreams and visions are frequently mentioned in the Bible. The difference seems to be simply that dreams occur at night and visions in the day. You may find it useful to look at references such as: Daniel 7, Genesis 46:2, 1 Samuel 3, Matthew 2: 13, 19, Acts 10:9-16.

It is however important to remember that the people of the Bible did not view all dreams as supernatural and from God and neither should we.

Does God still speak in dreams today? A strict cessationist position would say no. As we now have God's Word (Joseph didn't even have the book of Genesis to read!) see Hebrews 1:1-2. However there are many reports of people coming to faith after God has spoken to them - particularly in countries that are closed to the Gospel and there is no other way for people to hear the good news.

Have you met someone who claimed to have a dream or vision from God?

God purpose for Joseph fulfilled

One common theme from the story of Joseph is that everything happens according to God's timing. The events of this chapter happen two years after Joseph interpreted the cup bearer's dreams and thirteen years after God revealed part of his plans to Joseph (in his dreams) and he was then sold into slavery. You may be able to share examples of God's timing from your own experience.

Why did God make Joseph wait 13 years? Have you yearned for something that God has later provided? See Isaiah 64:4/ 1 Corinthians 2:9.

v.38 Pharaoh recognised that the Spirit of God was in Joseph. For other examples of where God gives this special empowerment see Exodus 31:3, Judges 3:10, 1 Samuel 16:13.

Prayer Points

ADB

Give thanks that God has a sovereign plan for us as nations and individuals. Pray that we would patiently seek God and his plans for our lives.

Pray for Christians in Egypt and other countries affected by the Arab Spring especially Syria.

Jo Foster leaving for North Africa on the 23rd February.