

**Genesis 41: 1-37; “The Dreams of a Nation”, Sermon #102 in the series –
“Beginnings”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on October 20th,
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This morning we want to look once again at the interpretation of dreams. We saw in the last sermon how Joseph interpreted the dreams of two individual men who had been placed there in the prison with him. You will remember how his interpretation was favorable to the one, and unfavorable to the other. I applied this to you in terms of all Christians becoming more effective in their witness to Jesus Christ. People have dreams of what the meaning of life is. And we, as Christians, must learn to be faithful to people around us, to correctly interpret their dreams. We must look into the faces of people around us, and we must see when they are sad. We must look and see when they are disappointed because they are in a jail of their own making, having sinned against God.

We must learn to look carefully at what people are trusting in for their salvation. Are they trusting in Jesus Christ and the gospel of His grace? Or are they trusting in a gospel of their own works religious or otherwise? We who are Christians, know that the meaning of life is found in God, and in His Son Jesus Christ. The way to live our lives to His glory, to please Him and to honor Him, is found in obedience to His blessed Word the Bible. All men’s dreams must be brought to this touchstone, and an interpretation given.

This morning I want you to see that it is the duty of the Christian minister, when the opportunity is given to him to speak, to interpret the dreams of a nation also. He is to give to its leaders the godly principles of wisdom which will preserve that nation and other nations in times of calamity. The question that I will ask is this: What is the responsibility of the Christian minister, or others who may have opportunity to speak, in relation to the dreams of a nation and her leaders? And I think that if we look carefully we will find that there are 4 principles of truth in this passage, that all men should remember, when they would speak about God, to the leaders of a nation.

1st – It should be remembered by all men that nations and their leaders have dreams that need to be interpreted in light of God’s Word. (verses 1-8)

Whenever the Bible would teach us something important about God’s providence and His way of doing things, you will find words something like the ones that we find at the beginning of this chapter – “Then it came to pass...” For everyone who is trusting in the Lord to act on their behalf, good things will come to pass if it is in accord with His blessed Word. When a believer reads these words, “then it came to pass”, they should realize that God will not forget them; that there is a time and season for everything in God’s purpose and He will surely fulfill it.

When I last spoke to you of Joseph, I turned you to Psalm 105 where there is found some information that is not found in the account in Genesis. It says there that, “Joseph was laid in irons until the time that God’s Word came to pass.” “The Word of the Lord tested him.” This is what God’s Word does with all true believers. He tests them, with and by His Word, to prove that they will by faith, submit to His ordering of things, and thus learn to glorify Him even in adversity and affliction.

I am sure that there were many times in those years, in which Joseph lay in that wretched prison, that he longed to be free. He had not come into this dungeon because of sins that he had committed. Rather, it was the very opposite. He had come there because he had faithfully obeyed God. He was actually just as much the prisoner of the Lord, as he was the prisoner of men. The Lord would release him at just the right time to fulfill His purpose. Let us understand that God’s time is usually not our time, but His time is always perfect. So Joseph learned to glorify God, right there in the dungeon, and He did not simply pray to be released.

The Apostle Peter says, “Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.” Joseph was doing this very thing, and the time of his exaltation was

going to come to pass. God was going to use the King of Egypt's dreams to be the means of Joseph's exaltation. Well, at the end of two full years of Joseph's being in prison, Pharaoh had a dream. He dreamed that he was standing by the River and he saw these seven fine looking and fat cows come out of the river, and they fed in the meadow. And then he saw seven ugly and gaunt cows come up after them, out the river, and they ate up the seven fine looking cows. After this he woke up. Then he slept again, and this time dreamed a dream of seven plump and good heads of grain being eaten by seven thin heads of grain.

In verse 8 of our text, it says that in the morning his spirit was troubled. And so, he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. He told them about his dreams, but no one could interpret them. Pharaoh needed to know – What did these strange dreams mean? Similarly, the leaders of nations have dreams that need interpretation, even as the dreams of individuals need interpretation. They have dreams for how their nation can be great, and how it can face crisis, and how it can prosper, and how it can be saved from judgment, and how it can be blessed and prospered.

But the leaders of every nation should understand that it is God's ministers who He has appointed to speak to them about these things. This text is the proof of this. None of Egypt's wise men, none of her magicians could interpret Pharaoh's dream. The answers for how nations should be led, and how they should be guided and governed in times of difficulty, do not come from magicians, or diviners, or those who seek to prognosticate the future based on their own wisdom and observation. The answers should be sought for from godly men and ministers; counselors who will rightly handle and apply God's Word to the situation under consideration.

Pharaoh knew none of this when he first had this troubling dream. He had been worshiping false gods all of his life. But he was going to learn of God's power and His great wisdom, very shortly. He needed to be guided in his mind to the right conclusions. God would see to it that he was guided, for Joseph's sake, and for the sake of all the people of Israel, and for the sake of many people from many nations. Listen to what it says in Isaiah chapter 8, verse 13 and following. "And when they say to you, 'Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter, should not a people seek their God?' "Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living?" "To the law and to the testimony!" "If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

Events that are taking place in the political realm do need interpretation. Political leaders need counsel about how to interpret their dreams for the nation. But that interpretation, in our days, in every nation, should be made in light of what the Bible says is true. It cannot be made according to crazy thoughts and conclusions of those who do not believe that there is a God, or by those who are into the occult, or by those who believe in one of the false religions of the world. Every nation that wants to truly prosper and to be blessed by God needs to take heed to God's Word the Bible. The leaders of our nation should receive the witness of the pastors and preachers of God's Word in regard to the sins of our nation, and also the righteousness that God expects.

Our nation will only prosper when we take heed to the 10 Commandments, and when we learn to keep them by the grace of Christ. I am saying that our nation's leaders should receive the truth that there is only One true and living God, and that His Only-Begotten Son's name is Jesus Christ. This we must declare to them to them because we the correct interpretation of the dreams which God has given, will never be understood. The leaders of our nation should receive the truth of the Bible, that the worship of God is an exclusive thing. It is by faith in Christ alone, and the correct interpretation comes and is brought to light and made known.

All other persons who profess to speak for God, if they speak not according to God's word, the Bible, are false prophets. Figures such as Buddha, Mohammed, and Joseph Smith will never save any nation or people from going down to the pit. They will, however, lead people to that

awful place of God's judgment in hell, because they add to the only true revelation of the One True and Living God. They do not faithfully represent God or His will, because they will not confess that Jesus Christ is the only Savior from sin and the Bible alone is the only way of wisely coming to terms with our life and all political issues. Our leaders need to know that God will not be slighted or ignored. He will judge nations as well as individual people. Psalm 33: 10-12 says, "The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect." "The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations." "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people He has chosen as His own inheritance."

Men do not need Mohammed or Buddha, or Joseph Smith to be saved, and to live a righteous life; but they must have Jesus Christ. And this great truth will only be established in our society when it is God's time. It can only be established by His coming in power to revive His people and to bring the leaders of our country to a greater consensus of agreement about what should be done to promote the truth of His Word. It will take a Joseph or a number of Josephs to give the right interpretation. This is why our country's leaders should take heed to sound Bible teachers and receive the counsel of the Word of God. It will bring true prosperity to our nation.

2nd – It should be remembered by all men that only God can give a nation and her leaders an answer of peace.

Verses 9-13 say – "Then the chief butler spoke to Pharaoh, saying: 'I remember my faults this day.'" "When Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and put me in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, both me and the chief baker, we each had a dream I one night, he and I." "Each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his own dream." "Now there was a young Hebrew man with us there, a servant of the captain of the guard." "And we told him, and he interpreted according to his own dream." "And it came to pass, just as he interpreted, for so it happened." "He restored me to my office, and he hanged him."

Now, I would assert to you, that it is the beginning of great things in a country when men in high places, men who have influence or responsibilities to kings or Presidents, begin to remember their faults, and to confess them before God and in the presence of the King. Pharaoh is not God in this passage, but he is a man in a position of authority who can change things. And God will give the chief butler the common grace to remember his faults and to remember Joseph.

And here, it was the testimony of this chief butler, remembering his own sins, that brought Joseph immediately and directly out of prison and into the presence of the King. He remembered the "gospel" that had been declared to him by Joseph; the favorable interpretation that he was given. He declared that there was a man who could interpret dreams, because these dreams both came to pass. It is a very good thing when the true interpretation of the gospel is brought to light in any country or society. How precious a thing it is when the truth of Christ is brought to light in the presence of men in authority. This is what we ought to pray for in regard to our own nation. Sometimes a whole nation of people can be savingly wrought upon by God's Word through this means, and Christ's Spirit can bring salvation to many.

Listen to Isaiah 26: 1-3. This is speaking particularly of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ in the latter day when all anti-Christian enemies will be overcome and destroyed, but it also has application to any nation in any generation in a general spiritual sense which can be applied in principle to our country – "In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: 'We have a strong city; God will appoint salvation for walls and bulwarks.'" "Open the gates that the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in." "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You."

This is what comes from a nation and her leaders receiving and embracing the truth of the gospel. When a nation does this, when they keep the truth of the Word of God, God will keep

them in perfect peace. He gives them an answer of peace. These verses will yet be fulfilled in a coming day, in a greater sense than they ever have been in the history of the Church thus far, when the Jews will be converted to faith in Jesus Christ as a nation. They will be brought into the Church and through the united witness of Jews and Gentiles in the Church shall come the conversion of other nations in a general sense. Isaiah 60: 1-3 shows this. "Arise, shine; for your light has come!" (That is, true spiritual light to the nation of Israel to believe in Jesus Christ and to enter into His Church) "And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you."

"For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you." "The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising." "The sons of foreigners shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you; for in My wrath I struck you, but in My favor I have had mercy on you." "Therefore your gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day or night, that men may bring to you the wealth of the Gentiles, and their kings in procession."

And then referring to our King Jesus reigning upon the earth through His Church, it says, "For the nation and kingdom which will not serve you shall perish, and those nations shall utterly be ruined." How important and significant this is, that the right interpretation of a dream be given to Pharaoh and his nation and the many nations of that day. It would mean that they would not starve to death. How important and significant it is that the right interpretation of the Bible be given to our nation and to many nations.

It will become very apparent even in our own generation. Will we be lifted up as a nation to spread the gospel to ends of the earth, or will we come down to ruin and destruction because we will not listen to our Josephs, our gospel preachers and teachers? The dream of Pharaoh not only required interpretation but it also required the wisdom which our God alone, can give to men in positions of authority. God gave this wisdom through Joseph, his appointed and called man. Joseph was faithful as God's spokesman. He did not preach himself but he directed Pharaoh to God Himself. In verse 16 of our text he says – "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

So God used Joseph to interpret the dreams and to apply them correctly. He would point Pharaoh to God's word and His purposes and not to himself. This is always a good way to witness to the truth. When we share the truth of the Bible with people, we need to be careful to declare God's will, and then give God all the glory for whatever gifts and abilities that He has given us. People need to see this very clearly; that it is not in us to impart wisdom and revelation. It is something that comes from God Himself to any man, and it comes because of God's mercy. When we direct people to God's ability to impart wisdom and grace, they can more readily see that they themselves should believe in this God, receive His Truth, and live according to His commandments.

And when they will receive the love of the truth of the gospel and God's Word, then they will be saved. We should not exempt the leaders who are in the highest positions of authority from our consideration or our prayers. This is why the Apostle Paul says in 1st Timothy 2: 1 and 2 – "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence." Let us pray for revival for our country and for our nation's leaders that they will understand and embrace the gospel, and promote all that is true and good.

3rd – It should be remembered by all men that it is God who gives prosperity in our material blessings and spiritual blessings, and they should be stored up with us whenever it is possible. (verses 25-28)

It says in verse 25 – "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.” God was going to give Pharaoh and the land of Egypt seven years of good crops and then He would call for a famine for the seven following years. It ought to be evident to us from this that all of a nation’s prosperity is a blessing for which we ought to continually give God thanks. God can begin great prosperity when He chooses and He can end it when He chooses.

There are blessings of prosperity which come to a nation when they keep and obey the commandments of God, and then there are blessings which come upon nations which are simply fulfilling the purpose of God in His goodness and faithfulness to all men. They are linked to one another, but sometimes it is hard to see that all the connections that might depend upon one man’s faithfulness. In Deuteronomy 28: 1 it says, “Now it shall come to pass if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you on high above all nations of the earth.”

“And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God: Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country, blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks.” “Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.” These were blessings related to Israel’s faithfulness; their being diligent to obey the voice of the Lord their God. But the blessings of our text today were blessings related to God’s purpose to preserve the nation of Israel alive, and bring them down to Egypt, where they would dwell for 400 years.

These blessings were linked to Joseph’s exaltation and his becoming 2nd in command to Pharaoh. They were, however, in a very definite way, linked to his personal obedience to God. He would be tested in regard to his obedience; to be faithful to God, when he was in Potiphar’s house and beset with temptations. There were steps of personal obedience which Joseph would take, which were a matter of his keeping faith with God when he was in the prison and beset by afflictions. I think that even though Joseph went through all of these trials, afflictions, and difficulties in the 13 years after his brothers sold him down to Egypt, that he did not cease to store up the mercies of God.

What was it that sustained his faith during all this time of trial? He remembered that God was faithful and that He was with him. This is what established him in the path of duty and obedience. I believe that it was a reality with Joseph, that He kept remembering the dreams that God had given him years before, and He studied to keep his mind on God’s faithfulness. He stored up every mercy and blessing that he received. How very natural then, it would be for him, to see what he needed to say to Pharaoh in verse 33, “Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt.”

There was no selfish ambition in Joseph. There was no pride there. Rather, there was the exhibition of wisdom. He says – “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.”

What great wisdom was given to Joseph by God! But I think that Joseph had already learned to store up every memory of God’s faithfulness to him, so that he personally could be sustained all during that time of his own lean years in prison. This is what you and I should do as well. When things are going well for us, we should eagerly store up the memory of God’s abundant goodness. And then when there is a famine of the blessings of God, we can remind

ourselves of His past mercies, so that we will not faint in the days of trial. And having stored these things up in our minds and hearts, we should then cry to God for wisdom, and the power to declare God's goodness and His purpose before unbelieving kings and men.

4th – It should be remembered by all men that what is gathered during the years of prosperity, both materially and spiritually, is meant by God to be a means to preserve many people alive in times of famine.

Joseph says in verse 36 – “The 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.” Joseph was faithful to do exactly according to what God had shown him. I think that sometimes individual Christians do not see the connection between their own personal obedience; their faithfulness to God in keeping His Word on a daily basis, and the blessings and prosperity of their nation. How do you think that it would have been, if Joseph had not been diligent in his work, and faithful to God in Potiphar's house? If he had not been found trustworthy in his work how would things would have fallen out then, later on?

What if he had fallen to the temptation to sin with Potiphar's wife and had an affair with her? Would he simply have reasoned to himself – Well, I am a very great sinner and we all sin at one time or another, and so these things will work out all right for me? I think that I can commit this sin and it will affect no one else but me. No, I am quite certain that disciplinary actions by God would have had to have come upon him. And the great things that God intended, not only for him, but also for the whole nation, might have been drastically altered. God sovereignly decided in what years the blessings would come. He would sovereignly raise Joseph up, both to interpret the dream, and to find favor in Pharaoh's sight.

God would use Joseph's faithful obedience, as one man, to bless all of Egypt, and indeed all the world of his day with food when the famine was very severe. It was only because of the wisdom given to Joseph, who was given that wisdom from God, that many people did not perish. He stored up, in the good years, so that his labors would bless others in the lean years. Your faithfulness, your obedience to God, does affect the lives of many other people around you; especially if you are in a position of authority. God does bless obedience in many ways, even though our salvation from sin is not obtained by our works. We obey the gospel of Jesus Christ, and God leads us into all the truth and teaches us, because He is the God of our salvation.

But think with me about the obedience of Jesus Christ. He was and is the Faithful Man who abounds with blessings. It was His obedience to all of God's holy law, filling it up with His righteousness, showing it forth in loving and good deeds, that accomplished our salvation. He was the One who merited our favor and acceptance with God. It was His dying love on the cross that became the basis of our not perishing eternally, and of our not having to beg bread physically in this life, or to lack in spiritual blessings in any sense. Praise God today for the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, and trust in Him for your salvation if you never have. He is the greater Joseph, and the Deliverer of all God's people.