



# FEED MY SHEEP

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## Does God Still Speak Through Dreams?

*The Story of Joseph, Part 9*

We left off with Joseph still in prison having to suffer the bitter disappointment of his friend, the butler, forgetting to bring his case to the attention of Pharaoh. Ah, but as Joseph probably understood, it was not yet God's perfect time to bring him up. But now, two years later, God brings about the circumstances in which the butler suddenly remembers about Joseph—what a "coincidence!" No, simply God's sovereignty at work.

**Genesis 41:1** And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river.

**2** And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine [cows, heifers] and fat-fleshed; and they fed in a meadow.

**3** And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed; and stood by the *other* kine upon the brink of the river.

**4** And the ill favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke.

**5** And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good.

The word "rank" there is the same Hebrew word translated as "fat" in reference to the cows; so in other words, these are full and healthy stalks of grain. It is not corn as in what we call corn today because that was unknown in the old world. Corn is simply an old Elizabethan English word for grain.

**6** And, behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them.

**7** And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, *it was a dream.*

**8** And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but *there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.*

**9** Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day:

**10** Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house, *both me and the chief baker:*

**11** And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream.

**12** And *there was* there with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each man according to his dream he did interpret.

**13** And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged.

**14** Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh.

For centuries, I suppose, the saying has been: When in Rome, do as the Romans do. In those days, the Hebrew custom was for the men to grow their beards. And in any prison, of course, for security reasons, the prisoners were not about to receive any kind of shaving instrument. But when the call came for Joseph to appear before Pharaoh, he could have said: "Okay, I'll put on the clean clothes; but I'm a Hebrew. We don't shave our beards. If Pharaoh doesn't like it; that's tough!" Instead, Joseph saw the wisdom of *conforming to the system of Egypt in that matter.* There are lines to be drawn, of course. Did Joseph forsake Yahweh and conform to the point of worshiping the

Egyptian gods? No, even though he was in Egypt, he remained faithful to the one and only true God.

**15** And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and *there is* none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, *that* thou canst understand a dream to interpret it.

**16** And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, *It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.*

Once again, just as he had proclaimed to the butler and the baker, Joseph gives God the credit for proper dream interpretation.

**17** And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river:

**18** And, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fattleshed and well favoured; and they fed in a meadow:

**19** And, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill favoured and leanfleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness:

**20** And the lean and the ill favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine:

**21** And when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they *were* still ill favoured, as at the beginning. So I awoke.

**22** And I saw in my dream, and, behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good:

**23** And, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them:

**24** And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears: and I told *this* unto the magicians; but *there was* none that could declare *it* to me.

**25** And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh *is* one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he *is* about to do.

The dream is one. In other words, it is a double witness to the same future event. Joseph obviously had recalled his own double dream of the sheaves of grain and of the sun, moon and stars bowing down to him. Do you think that at this point Joseph had *any* inkling that he was on the threshold of being named the vizier—we would say, the prime minister, of the most powerful nation in the world at that time? We have no indication that God had given him any further prophetic vision than what he revealed through the dreams here, so my guess is that Joseph indeed had no idea what was about to transpire! He now explains the interpretation to Pharaoh.

**26** The seven good kine *are* seven years; and

the seven good ears *are* seven years: the dream *is* one.

**27** And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them *are* seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine.

**28** *This is* the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God *is* about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh.

**29** Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt:

**30** And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land;

**31** And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it *shall be* very grievous.

**32** And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; *it is* because the thing *is* established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

**33** Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

**34** Let Pharaoh do *this*, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.

**35** And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.

**36** And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.

**37** And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants.

**38** And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find *such a one* as this *is*, a man in whom the Spirit of God *is*?

**39** And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, *there is* none so discreet and wise as thou *art*:

**40** Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

**41** And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.

We will stop there with the text because I want to use this as a launching point to discuss the phenomenon of dreams and of their place in the life of a Christian in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The first question to ask ourselves is “Do dreams have *any* place in the life of a Christian believer today?” Of course, everybody dreams. It is a natural occurrence. But we’re asking, does trying to *interpret* our dreams have any place in

the life of a Christian?

Some preachers warn their flocks against trying to interpret dreams, telling them it is *dangerous* to their spiritual health. Some call it “dabbling in the occult.” Others don’t go that far. They agree that interpreting dreams does not constitute treading into areas forbidden by God. After all, we are dealing right here in the story of Joseph with God communicating future events through dreams, so how could that be forbidden to believers? So, no, these other ministers would say, it is not that dreams are part of the occult. God *does* use dreams as a means of communicating to believers.

But..., they go on,... you see, *dreams* are for those who are still baby Christians. They imply that when you are spiritually *mature*, that all you need is the *written* word of God, the Bible. I know people like that. For shorthand here, we will simply refer to them as “the Bible-only group.” I have friends and former colleagues who fall into that category of belief. They say God does not communicate to us today except and **only** through the written word of God.

As I was discussing this topic with someone on the phone the other day, I suggested that this becomes part and parcel of a whole mindset which affects their views on a whole range of issues; from eschatology, to the existence of spiritual beings, both good and evil ones; and it *especially affects their view of the sovereignty of God.*

It makes me sad for them, the Bible-only group, because what I am sure they do not realize is that their mindset closely resembles that of the Pharisees of Jesus’ day. Compare, for example: the Pharisees could quote the Scriptures better than most Bible-verse memorizers can today. The Pharisees believed in a coming Savior, just as the Bible-only believers are expecting the *second* coming of the Savior. The Pharisees claimed to believe in the resurrection of the body, a supernatural event; but yet they did not really expect to see supernatural events occurring in their individual experiences.

Thus, they did not *listen* for God’s voice *outside* of the Scriptures. And so what happened? They never heard his voice *in* the Scriptures either. How do we know that? Because Jesus told them that to their faces. When the Savior *did* appear in their midst, he plainly told them...

**John 5:37 And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.**

[The external appearance; i.e., Jesus — God manifested in the flesh.]

**46 For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.**

**47 But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?**

So all this leads to the broader question of just how *does* God speak to us today? Let’s begin here.

**Hebrews 1:1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,**

**2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;**

So the writer of Hebrews, presumably Paul, says that God spoke in Old Testament times in a multitude of ways through the prophets. But let me ask you: did God speak only through the prophets in the Old Testament?

Clearly not. His word came to many individuals who were not recognized and classified as prophets. He spoke through priests, through Noah, Abram, Isaac, Jacob, the judges. Therefore, Paul is not speaking in an *exclusive* manner in verse one. God did not speak exclusively through the prophets.

We establish that point because in verse two it states that in these last days God has spoken to us *by his Son*, and I would suggest to you that neither is that an exclusive statement. God did and does speak to us through his Son, but not *only* through his Son. Numerous examples in the New Testament demonstrate that God still speaks to us today in divers manners and we shall come back to them shortly, but we are limiting our discussion here to dreams. We include visions and trances with dreams since they are so very similar. They comprise one category in our view.

**Numbers 12:6 And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.**

We see then that dreams and visions were one of the chief means of divine communication in the *Old* Testament. But with the first coming of Christ then, did dreams and visions cease to be a divinely-sanctioned method of hearing from God? Not at all.

Because on the day of Pentecost, ten days *after* Jesus had ascended into heaven, Peter is addressing the crowd and he declares that the prophecy of Joel is

now beginning to come to pass. And then Peter quotes that prophecy from Joel.

**Acts 2:17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:**

We are still in New Testament times, my friends, and thus dreams and visions are among the legitimate methods of you hearing from your Creator. The New Testament is full of them, and we will point out a few in the course of the remainder of this study. To help with definitions, I am quoting Dr. Jack Deere as he draws these distinctions between dreams, visions and trances.

“Dreams consist of images—accompanied by thoughts and emotions—[which] we ‘see’ while we are asleep. The images may tell a coherent story or seem to make no sense at all. Visions are dreams we have when we are awake, and trances are a visionary state that occurs while we are awake. People in trances have a profound loss of consciousness of their surroundings... In a vision or trance we also may hear an audible voice.”

Pastor Deere states that in the Old Testament, God seemed to give the dreams and visions mostly to prophets. But in the New Testament, with the coming of the Holy Spirit, dreams, visions and other prophetic experiences become the normal experience for the whole church, as we just showed in Peter’s quoting Joel in Acts 2:17.

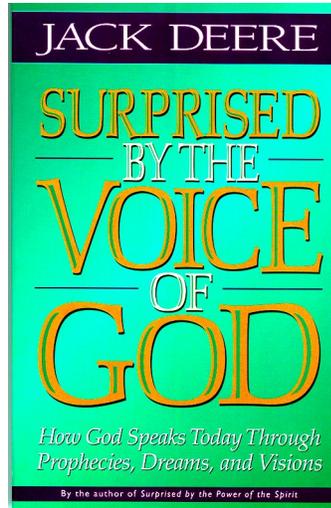
That quote of Dr. Jack Deere, by the way, comes from his excellent book called *Surprised by the Voice of God*. You see, he was once one of those who believed God spoke through the Bible-only. But a deeper study of *the Bible* led him to discoveries which transformed his Christian walk. It is a powerful book.

Specifically about dreams now, I am borrowing and outlining one of his chapters as the framework for my discussion. We will break it down into three sections:

- \* the purposes of dreams
- \* the interpretation of dreams and
- \* the misuse of dreams

(to be continued)

**Surprised by the Voice of God** by Jack Deere • 384 pages, bibliography, indexed. \$13 plus \$4 shipping, unless ordered with other items from fliers enclosed with this mailing, q.v.



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