

## Genesis 41:1-36

### Introduction

The older business man I met in seminary who always seemed to talk in riddles; he wanted to hire me but I could never figure out what he really did or what he needed me for; I needed someone to interpret for me!

1. In our passage today, we're going to see something similar: God revealed His plans to Pharaoh in dreams, but he didn't know what they meant; he needed someone to not only interpret the dreams for him but lead him in applying what God revealed
2. Big Idea: God uses us to explain His redemptive plan to the world and exhort them to act
3. Breakdown of the passage:
  - a. The Lord revealed His plans to Pharaoh (41:1-7)
  - b. The Lord sent Joseph to explain his plans to Pharaoh (41:8-32)
  - c. The Lord used Joseph to exhort Pharaoh in His plans (Genesis 41:33-36)

### A. The Lord revealed His plans to Pharaoh (READ Genesis 41:1-7)

1. We know that Pharaoh's dreams were not simply your average nightly dreams—they were revelation from God:
  - a. First, divinely inspired dreams have already played a significant role up to this point in the story of Joseph:
    - 1) Joseph was the recipient of two dreams in chapter 37
    - 2) The baker and the cupbearer were given dreams by God in chapter 40
    - 3) Looking forward, God used dreams he gave to Pharaoh to secure Joseph's release from prison and his rise to power in Egypt
  - b. Second, we also know these are divinely inspired dreams because later in this chapter Joseph states specifically that God was revealing his plans for Pharaoh (and subsequently Egypt) to him through the dreams
2. The Pharaoh had two dreams:
  - a. In the first dream, he was standing by the Nile when he saw seven healthy and fat cows get eaten by thin and ugly cows
  - b. In the second dream, he saw seven plump and good ears of corn get swallowed up by seven thin and scorched ears of corn
  - c. As we'll see in a moment, God was revealing to Pharaoh, in a symbolic way, His plans for Pharaoh and subsequently Egypt and even Joseph
3. Takeaway: God reveals His plans:
  - a. Since the Creation in Genesis 1, God has repeatedly revealed His plans to and for mankind

- b. Sometimes He revealed His specific plans for specific individuals, and even nations:
  - 1) In the Old Testament He revealed His plans for individuals like Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, and Solomon, and for nations like Israel and their enemies
  - 2) In the New Testament He did the same with John the Baptist, Mary and Joseph, the Apostles, and even nations like Israel and the nations during the end times
- c. God may not reveal to us His specific plan for our individual lives through direct revelation, visions, dreams, or prophets like He did for these saints, but He has revealed something more important: His redemptive plan
- d. God has revealed through the pages of Scripture His plan to save mankind—to rescue and redeem us from sin and death by grace through faith in Jesus Christ so that we might not perish but have eternal life
- e. He didn't hide this from us so that we might flounder around blindly trying to discover it on our own; He's a revelatory God which means that He reveals His plans so that we might know them

B. The Lord sent Joseph to explain his plans to Pharaoh (Genesis 41:8-32)
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1. Immediately upon waking up, the Pharaoh was troubled because he didn't understand his dreams (READ 41:8):
  - a. The Pharaoh was troubled because like most ancient Egyptians, he believed that dreams were communications from either their gods or those in the afterlife, but he didn't understand what the dreams meant
  - b. So, he called his magicians and wisemen, but they couldn't interpret his dreams either; in fact, v. 8 says **"there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh"**
2. Fortunately, all was not lost because his cupbearer remembered how Joseph correctly interpreted his dream while in prison (READ 41:9-13):
  - a. It's not clear if the cupbearer's remark about remembering his own offenses refers to the offenses that got him sent to prison or if he was admitting an offense against Joseph by not remembering him after he was released
  - b. Either way, he recounted to Pharaoh how Joseph had interpreted the dreams he and the chief baker had while in prison correctly: **"and just as he interpreted for us, so it happened; he restored me in my office, but he hanged him"** (13)
3. Upon hearing this, Pharaoh summoned Joseph from prison to see if he could interpret his dreams (READ 41:14-24):
  - a. V. 14 reveals that there was a certain amount of urgency to the Pharaoh's request because it says **"they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon"**:
    - 1) We also get our only real glimpse into the nature of the prison to which Joseph had been confined for at least the past two years
    - 2) The word **"dungeon"** refers to a pit, well or cistern

- b. When the Pharaoh informed Joseph of why he was there, Joseph's response was both humble and confident:
  - 1) We see his humility when he refused to take credit for being able to interpret dreams
  - 2) Instead gave credit to the real source: **"It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer"**—he did something similar back in 40:8 (READ)
- c. So, the Pharaoh proceeded to tell Joseph about his dreams and God provided the interpretation (meaning) through Joseph (41:17-32):
  - 1) Pharaoh recounted his dream to Joseph (READ 41:17-24)
  - 2) After hearing the dreams, God provided the meaning of the dreams through Joseph (READ 41:25-32):
    - a. God had revealed to Pharaoh what He was about to do in Egypt and both dreams referred to the same thing
    - b. The seven good cows and seven good ears of corn represented seven years of great abundance, while the seven lean and ugly cows and lean ears of corn represented seven years of famine that would follow the years of abundance
    - c. The famine would be so heavy and severe that the years of abundance would all but be forgotten
    - d. Finally, the purpose behind two dreams rather than one, was that God was confirming the matter and indicating He would do it quickly
- 4. Takeaway: the world doesn't readily or naturally understand God's plan so He sends us to explain it to them:
  - a. Up until this point, no one could understand the meaning of what God had revealed to Pharaoh (if you want to know what a passage is about, look at what's repeated):
    - 1) V. 8a: Pharaoh's spirit was troubled because he didn't understand it
    - 2) V. 8b: **"And Pharaoh recounted to them his dream, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh"**—not his magicians or his wisemen
    - 3) V. 15: **"And Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it;'"**
    - 4) V. 24: **"...but there was no one who could declare it to me."**
  - b. Pharaoh didn't understand what God had revealed to him so God sent Joseph to him to explain it
  - c. This reminds me of the story of Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 (READ Acts 8:26-31—Phillip ultimately explained the passage to him on how it related to Jesus and the eunuch was saved)
  - d. The world may see what God has revealed about Himself in Creation, and they may read about and hear about the events in the Bible, and they may even know who Jesus is, but most fail to truly understand these things and need someone to explain them
  - e. We are that someone, and it's our responsibility as servants of Jesus and those who know Him and His Word to explain what it all means

### C. The Lord used Joseph to exhort the Pharaoh in His plans (READ Genesis 41:33-36)

1. We're going to spend more time on these verses next week, but for now I just want to highlight the fact that Joseph didn't stop at explaining God's plan: he exhorted the Pharaoh to act (RE-READ 41:34):
  - a. Notice he called on the Pharaoh to **"take action"**
  - b. He even laid out a proposal for how the Pharaoh could do that
  - c. Joseph recognized that it wasn't enough for the Pharaoh to have heard about God's plans, or to even understand those plans
  - d. He knew he needed to exhort Pharaoh to act in order for anyone to be saved during the famine
2. The same is true of God's redemptive plan: it's not enough to simply know the Gospel, or even understand it; the only way to be saved is to act and place our faith and trust in Jesus Christ
3. Takeaway: explaining the Gospel isn't enough; we need to exhort people to take it seriously and act:
  - a. When Bob K. shared the Gospel with me, one of the things he did was urge me to take it seriously, and then encouraged me to pray that night when I went to bed; he even shared how I might pray
  - b. When Peter preached at Pentecost, Acts 2:40 says he **"kept on exhorting them saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation.'"**
  - c. This is probably where I struggle the most when sharing my faith or the Gospel with people—most often I stop short of exhorting them to accept Christ:
    - 1) I'm not talking about pressuring them to make a decision or manipulating them into saying a sinner's prayer
    - 2) I'm talking about making it really clear how much they need Christ and how important it is that they decide to accept him
    - 3) I seem to really struggle with encouraging and urging them to do that
  - d. Maybe you struggle with that as well, and maybe by God's grace and with the Help of the Holy Spirit we can learn to do that better because the world needs us to not only explain the Gospel to them but exhort them to trust Jesus for salvation

### Conclusion

1. God revealed His plans to Pharaoh, and then sent Joseph to explain those plans and exhort the Pharaoh to take action
2. In a similar way, God has revealed His redemptive plan to mankind through Jesus and the Gospel, and He sends us to them to explain the Gospel and exhort them to take