



The Sermon

Dr. Steven J. Lawson

Genesis 41:1-37

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"God, Dreams, & Disasters"

TRANSCRIPT

Well, I'm excited to look at the passage that we're going to be looking at today. And if you're new to Trinity, we're going through the book of Genesis verse by verse, and we've been doing it for a little while, and we have come to Genesis chapter 41. So I want to invite you to take your Bible and turn with me to Genesis chapter 41. And I just want to step right into this, because we've got a lot of ground to cover today, and I want to get it all in. Genesis chapter 41, and I want to begin reading in verse 1. We're going to go through verse 37. The title of this message is "God, Dreams, & Disasters. God, Dreams, & Disasters." I want to begin reading in verse 1. I hope you have a Bible that's open in front of you and that you can follow along with me.

"Now it happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had a dream, and behold, he was standing by the Nile. And lo, from the Nile there came up seven cows, sleek and fat; and they grazed in the marsh grass. Then behold, seven other cows came up after them from the Nile, ugly and gaunt, and they stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. The ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven sleek and fat cows. Then Pharaoh awoke. He fell asleep and dreamed a second time; and behold, seven ears of grain came up on a single stalk, plump and good. Then behold, seven ears, thin and scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them. The thin ears swallowed up the seven plump and full ears. Then Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream. Now in the morning his spirit was troubled, so he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

"Then the chief cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh, saying, 'I would make mention today of my own offenses. Pharaoh was furious with his servants, and he put me in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, both me and the chief baker. We had a dream on the same night, he and I; each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his own dream. Now a Hebrew lad was with us, a servant of the captain of the bodyguard, and we related them to him, and he interpreted our dreams for us. To each one he interpreted according to his own dream. And just as he interpreted for us, so it happened; he restored me in my office, but he hanged him.'

"Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph, and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon; and when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came to Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.' Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, 'It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.'

"So Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, 'In my dream, behold, I was standing on the bank of the Nile; and behold, seven cows, fat and sleek came up out of the Nile, and they grazed in the marsh grass. Lo, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such as I had never seen for ugliness in all the land of Egypt; and the lean and ugly cows ate up the first seven fat cows. Yet when they had devoured them, it could not be detected that they had devoured them, for they were just as ugly as before. Then I awoke. I saw also in my dream, and behold, seven ears, full and good, came up on a single stalk; and lo, seven ears, withered, thin, and scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them; and the thin ears swallowed the seven good ears. Then I told it to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me.'

"Now Joseph said to Pharaoh, 'Pharaoh's dreams are one and the same; God has told to Pharaoh what He' - God - 'is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one and the same. The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven lean ears scorched by the east wind will be seven years of famine. It is as I have spoken to Pharaoh: God has shown to Pharaoh what He' - God - 'is about to do. Behold, seven years of great abundance are coming in all the land of Egypt; and after them seven years of famine will come, and all the abundance will be forgotten in the land of Egypt, and the famine will ravage the land. So the abundance will be unknown in the land because of that subsequent famine; for it will be very severe. Now as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, it means

that the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about. Now let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh take action to appoint overseers in charge of the land, and let him exact a fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven years of abundance. Then let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and store up the grain for food in the cities under Pharaoh's authority, and let them guard it. Let the food become as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land will not perish during the famine.' Now the proposal seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his servants." This is the reading of God's inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word. Let us go to its Author in prayer.

[Prayer] Father in heaven, we have heard Your Word; and we know that you're a God of all truth and You speak only truth. There is no error that comes from Your lips, and that You have recorded for us what took place those many, many years ago so that we, sitting here today, could have this read in our ears and have it set before our eyes and for us to learn about You. And so I pray, God, today that as we look at this text, look at this passage, that You will come through loud and clear to us. We need You more than we need anything or anyone in this world. We desire to seek first the kingdom of God and Your righteousness, and let all these other things be added to us. We desire to set our mind on things above and not on things of the earth. And so now, open our eyes, that we may behold wondrous truths in Your Word. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

Needless to say, there's a lot going on in this passage. And there are different ways to look at a passage of scripture like this. On one hand, we can begin to look at it through the lens of man's perspective. We could look at it through the eyes of Pharaoh and see the dream that Pharaoh received, the distress that he felt, the action that Pharaoh took, and we could look at it through Pharaoh's eyes. Or, we can look at it through Joseph's perspective and the summons he received while he's in the prison to be brought up before Pharaoh, and the dream that he interpreted, and the plan that he laid out for Pharaoh. That's one way to look at a passage.

The other way is to focus upon these verses from God's perspective, that is to see this first and foremost as the dream that God gave, the distress that God caused, the warning that God sent. The best way to see any passage of scripture like this is always to see it first from God's perspective, because when we have God rightly in view everything else comes into focus properly. A key verse in this chapter, the first key verse is verse 16, in

which Joseph said, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer." Even Joseph himself says this chapter is not about him, it's about God. And then in verse 25 we read, "God has told to Pharaoh what He is about to do," what God is about to do. It's not about Pharaoh, this is about what God is about to do. And then in verse 28 we read, "God has shown to Pharaoh what He" - God - "is about to do. First and foremost, this is not about what Pharaoh does, it's about what God does. And then the same in verse 32, only in stronger language. Joseph says, "The matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about."

I want us to climb to the top of the mountain and have the most eternal perspective as we look at this chapter. I don't want us to be in the lowlands, I want us to be high above the lowlands on the mountaintop and to see God in this chapter. This is how we must read our Bibles, always first and foremost looking for God. The chief purpose of the Word of God is to reveal the God of the Word. Let me repeat that: the chief purpose of the Word of God is to reveal the God of the Word. This is how the whole book of Genesis begins, is it not? Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God." And this is how the book of Genesis concludes in Genesis 50:20, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good."

The whole book of Genesis is first and foremost about God. God is in the spotlight, man is in the shadows. God is first and foremost, man is standing on the periphery. The book of Genesis is about God creating, and God commanding, and God cursing, and God covenanting, and God conquering throughout this book. And this is how we must view our own lives. It's not about us, it's about God. Your life is not about you, your life is about God and God at work in your life.

So, what is God doing in your life? How is God changing you? How is God encouraging you? How is God maturing you? How is God using you? How is God challenging you? Your life is all about what God is doing in your life. And so as we look at this chapter, we want to remember that though it involves Pharaoh and though it involves Joseph, they are only supportive actors on the stage of human history. It is God who has the lead role, it is what God is doing, it is what God is about.

So, let's walk now through this chapter, and we'll have an eye out for God. I want you to note, first, as we walk through this chapter and divide this chapter up, I want you to note first, "the dream"; that's very obvious, verses 1-7, "the dream."

"Now it happened at the end of two full years," and that is to let us know that Joseph has been in prison for two full years, plus a little bit longer. Joseph was kidnapped and taken down to Egypt at age 17, and he was purchased there by Potiphar and served in Potiphar's house for a decade, and then he was put into prison at age 28. He is now age 30. He's lived the life of an old man by the time he's age 30.

And so, "At the end of two full years in prison that Pharaoh had a dream." Pharaoh was the King of Egypt. Pharaoh was the mightiest man in this part of the known world, and he had a dream. A dream is when you are asleep, and there comes into your mind visual panorama in front of you, the unfolding of events. And this is quite a bizarre dream that Pharaoh has. I don't know about you; I've never had a good dream, I've never awakened excited. All my dreams are bad dreams. I dreamed last night Texas Tech lost, and I woke up, and it was real.

So, Pharaoh has this dream, and this is what the dream was, at the end of verse 1: "Behold," - meaning, "Look at this" - "he" - Pharaoh - "was standing by the Nile." He was so close to the Nile River in his dream it was almost as if he is standing over the precipice of the bank and he's able to see the Nile River, and he's able to see what is about to come out of the Nile River.

In verse 2, "And lo, from the Nile there came up seven cows, sleek and fat," - they have been down in the river, because they wanted to submerge themselves into the Nile River in order to stay cool under the hot sun in that part of the world, and also to escape the countless flies and birds that would come and land on them. And so they're now coming up out of the Nile River, sleek and fat. That's a good thing if you're a cow - "sleek," meaning beautiful, beautiful specimens; and "fat" meaning literally filled out, well-fed - "and they grazed in the marsh grass." Along the banks of the Nile River is marshland with greenery and vegetation, and they are there on the edge eating to their heart's desire and becoming full and fat and beefy, and they now come stepping out of the Nile River.

Verse 3, "Then behold, seven other cows came up also out of the Nile River," - came up after them from the Nile, and they followed them - "and they are ugly and gaunt." That they have not been feeding on the marshland, on the marsh grass; and they're ugly. Literally in the Hebrew, 5622 Dyer Street, Suite 200 | Dallas, Texas | 75206 | 214.972.9679 | TrinityBiblechurchofdallas.com

the word means "miserable" and - or "misery," and they are miserable-looking, they are eyesores, and they are gaunt, they are grotesque-looking. And "gaunt" means that they are emaciated and shriveled up. Their ribcage would be protruding. They are thin-bodied, literally. They are lean, they are haggardly. Verse 4, "The ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven sleek and fat cows," just devoured them in this bizarre dream. "Then Pharaoh awoke." And no doubt, he just was almost in a sweat, and he just wakes up and is troubled.

Verse 5 says, "He fell asleep and dreamed a second time," - and this second dream is really an extension of the first dream, though it's two dreams - "and behold, seven ears of grain came up on a single stalk." So this single stock is very prolific and productive and plentiful. "And the ears of grain" - verse 5 says - "are plump and good." That means lush and excellent.

Verse 6, "Then behold, seven ears, thin and scorched by the east wind" - they are thin, meaning very small, they haven't been able to grow to a proper size; and they are scorched by this east wind, which is blowing in off of the hot desert and causing the retardation of the growth of these ears; and so they're withered and they're blighted, and it's caused crop failure. And it says - "sprouted up after them." The first, the good; then the bad. Verse 7, "The thin ears swallowed up the seven plump and full ears." What a strange dream. And yet, this is coming from God. "Then Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream."

In Old Testament times God occasionally communicated in a dream, not regularly, just infrequently. He did so with Jacob in Genesis 28, and He did in the last chapter with the cupbearer and the chief baker in chapter 40. He does so with Pharaoh here, and the other time is with Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel chapter 2. But those times have now ceased, and God is no longer communicating through dreams.

One key text to put in front of you is Hebrews 1:1-2 which reads, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets." The fathers are the patriarchs, the first two appear on the scene of human history following creation, and the prophets are those messengers of God throughout the Old Testament. "God spoke to the fathers in the prophets in many portions," and that means ethics and eras and seasons for over at least 1,500 years, from Moses to Malachi. And depending upon how you date the book of Job, it

could be as much as 1,800 years that God spoke in these many portions of time, and in many ways.

And God had multiple ways by which He made Himself known with divine revelation in the Old Testament. There were dreams. There were visions. There was an audible voice. There were theophanies when God would appear as an angel. There were stone tablets, like at Mount Sinai where God would literally write down the Ten Commandments and just hand them to Moses. And there were angels. And there were many other ways that God spoke in the Old Testament, that verse 2 says, "In these last days" - referring to the days between the first and the second coming of Christ, the time in which we find ourselves - "He has spoken to us in His Son," that God is no longer speaking to us as He once did, which in reality was almost like an infantile baby talk, that now in the New Testament we have a much more profound and precise and fuller and deeper revelation that has been given to us, and it is all about the Lord Jesus Christ.

The four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), it is Christ who is speaking. In the book of Acts, it is the apostles proclaiming Christ and Him crucified. The Epistles, the 21 Epistles in the New Testament are all there to interpret and explain and to defend Christ. In the book of Revelation, the title most properly is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." It's a singular. It's only the country preacher that calls it "Revelations." It is "The Revelation," singular, chapter 1, verse 1, of Jesus Christ.

So God now is speaking to us in ways that are very unique and distinct and are a far more robust manner of expression in the 27 books of the New Testament. And that is why today as I'm standing here, I'm not telling you about some dream I had and then trying to interpret this dream for you to live your Christian life. And if someone comes up to you and says that they want to share their dream with you that God has spoken to them to tell you this, you need to saturate them with your absence and exit stage left, because this is how God is speaking to us today, not with fool's gold.

So this leads now, second, to "the distress." It's had quite an impact on Pharaoh, as you can imagine, to receive this crazy dream. And so we read in verse 8, "Now in the morning his spirit was troubled," - in the original language this word "troubled," it means "disturbed," "shaken." He was shaken to the core of his being, he was unsettled. The word means "perturbed." - "and so he sent and called for all the magicians there in that idolatrous land of Egypt," - they had all kinds of magicians that had

worked their way into the inner circle of Pharaoh: they were soothsayers, they were cultic priests dealing with magic, they were casters of spells supposedly - "and all the wise men." These wise men were fortunetellers and interpreters of omens and signs, and readers of the stars and the planets. And so he called for all of them to come so that they could interpret his dream for him.

"And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh." Of course there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh, because these dreams were from God. And if you don't know God, and if you do not have the Holy Spirit of God inside of you, you are like a blind man trying to describe a sunset, you're like a deaf person trying to describe a symphony. You do not have the spiritual apparatus, you do not have the spiritual capacity to operate on that frequency level, because this dream has come from God; and it would be utterly impossible for them to explain the things of God to Pharaoh, because they are tools of the devil.

I think of 1 Corinthians 2:14, which has so much to say for us today on this very same matter. It says, "A natural man" - and a natural man is someone who has had a natural birth but has never had a supernatural birth, has never been born again. A natural man is an unconverted person who simply can operate on a natural level in a natural world, but has never stepped into the spiritual supernatural world of God, the kingdom of God. "A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God," - and the things of the Spirit of God are divine revelation that are recorded for us in Scripture - "for they your foolishness to him." It's incomprehensible to them. "And he" - the natural man - "cannot understand them," - it's like the word of God is in English, and they can only understand Russian. There's no connection of understanding, because the natural man does not have the Holy Spirit of God - "he cannot understand them because, they are spiritually appraised." It's just on a whole different level and of a whole different dimension. By the way, that's why there was not a traffic jam to get to church this morning, because the world is without the Holy Spirit of God, and they do not understand even the simplest gospel presentation, until the Holy Spirit is at work within them.

Well, this leads us now to, number three, in verse 9, "the direction," because this whole now narrative will pivot towards Joseph in a new direction. And in verse 9 when we read, "Then the cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh." The cupbearer is Pharaoh's servant, who was beside him, as all the magicians and the wise men had come in; so he was present for this

gathering and overheard about his master's dreams, and he has witnessed the magicians complete, total inability to interpret this dream.

And so the cupbearer speaks up, and he said, "I would make mention today of my many offenses." And you saw those last week, how he and the chief baker offended the king of Egypt in chapter 40, verse 1, and so he humbly is speaking of his inadvertent offenses in verse 2. "Pharaoh was furious with his servants" - that refers to himself and the chief baker - "and he" - Pharaoh - "put me" - the cupbearer - "in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, both me and the chief baker." Verse 11, "We had a dream on the same night, he and I," - they had two different dreams, one each to each one of them - "and each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his own dream."

Verse 12, "Now a Hebrew youth," and that is said in a very dismissive, demeaning way. "This little Jewish lad that was with us, a servant of the captain of the bodyguard. And just as he" - verse 13, Joseph - "interpreted for us, so it happened." And you'll recall last week how the cupbearer was promoted and the chief baker was hung exactly as Joseph had interpreted their dreams. He's two for two, he's got a good track record.

And so the cupbearer brings up Joseph's name now to Pharaoh, and he says, "He" - Pharaoh - "restored me," - the cupbearer - "and he hanged him," referring to the chief baker. Now here's what I want us to see, how the wheels of providence often turn on the smallest little gears, how large doors of providence often swing on the smallest hinges on that door, that what brought Joseph out of prison and brings him before Pharaoh is this little cupbearer who throws his name in at the end. This wasn't Joseph sending his resume up to Pharaoh. This wasn't Joseph self-promoting. This wasn't Joseph self-seeking. Joseph had absolutely nothing to do with this; it was God working through the most insignificant servant, a cupbearer, that will be the link in the chain that will bring Joseph ultimately to the pinnacle of Egypt.

I've thought about my life and my ministry; it's always been this way. When I went to seminary here in Dallas, it came time for me to graduate. I taught a bible study over in the Park Cities, and someone who is attending that bible study - I don't even know his name - turned in my name to a large church in Arkansas, Fayetteville; and the next thing I knew, I'm the college pastor of this church in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and I'm the chaplain for the Razorbacks, and I don't even know who turned my name in. I was there for

a year, and I realized I needed to move on so I would be in a pulpit every Sunday; and a church contacted me. And it turned out they had gone through every name on their list and they were kind of stuck with calling me. Sometimes the last are first. And turns out, it was like a junior in college sitting on the back row of my Sunday School class, not even a worship service, my Sunday School class, just passes my name on to his father who happens to be on a pulpit committee; and the next thing I know I get a letter in the mail. I've never applied for any ministry. I've never turned in a resume. I think the last resume I did, the highlight, was junior high school. But that's how God so often works in providence. And that's how it happens here. God always has a cupbearer someplace that becomes a point of contact in your life to help you get to the next place.

I want you to note now in verse 14, "the dispatch," because once Pharaoh has heard, "OK, so there's this Hebrew youth who can interpret dreams. Go get him; bring him here." And so in verse 14 we read, "Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph," - he took immediate action - "and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon." They sensed the urgency of the moment when Pharaoh said, "Go right now and find him," they hot-footed it, they got Joseph and they brought him out.

But I love what's next, before he got to Pharaoh: "and when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes." Why? Because he's going to have an audience with the king, and it would be disrespectful to come just as he was; that the king is so mighty and so important to show honor to the king, he must shave and be clean-cut, and he must take off his dirty clothes and put on the best clothes that he had, whatever that was, in prison, in order to present himself before the king.

And I can't let this pass without just saying this from my perspective. When I come to Trinity, when I come to church, I'm having an audience with the King. The horizontal is secondary, my interaction with you. What is primary is my audience with the King, that I worship the Lord, and come and lead you before the throne of grace. And so as I do, I want to be clean-shaven. I want to have on my best clothes. They don't have to be great, they just - whatever is the best I have. But it would be totally incongruent for me to come before the king of Egypt and just present myself in an unkept manner.

When I come before a king who is far greater, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, I don't want to appear as though I just fell out of bed, but to give the impression to my own heart that this is the most important hour of

my entire week, that nothing rises to a higher level of importance than to come to the Lord's house on the Lord's Day and to hear the Lord's word, proclaim the Lord's Son in the power of the Lord's Spirit. And so I appreciate Joseph shaving, putting on clean clothes, whatever the best that he had, to come before the king to show honor and respect to the king. And it says, "he came to Pharaoh." And in this moment he has elevated from the prison to the palace by the extraordinary providence of God. He is being acted upon. This is not Joseph seeking the office, the office is seeking Joseph.

And so, verse 15, "Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I've had a dream, but no one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.'" You bet he can interpret it, because God is with him, and he's operating on God's plane of existence. He knows God. God is with him, and God is in him, and God has gifted him, and God has given him this ability. Yes, he can interpret dreams that come from God.

So, verse 16, "Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying," – and this really needs to be our motto, this needs to be tattooed on the inside of our eyelids (I'm speaking metaphorically here) – 'It is not in me. I'm not the source, I'm not the originator. It's not my ability. It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.'" Joseph understands he's just the servant, not just to Pharaoh, he's the servant of God, and that Joseph is just a middle man, and whatever good will come to Pharaoh will have to come from God through Joseph to him. Joseph is only the messenger. He's not the author; he's just the messenger, he's just the delivery boy.

We must always have this perspective: "It's not in me." "In me dwells no good thing," Paul says in Romans 7. "I'm the problem. It's not in me; but God will give it." That's what Paul was saying in 1 Corinthians 15:10. Listen to this, 1 Corinthians 15:10, "By the grace of God I am what I am." That's your testimony; that's my testimony. "I am what I am by the grace of God."

Let me break that down. Everything wrong in my life is on me, and everything good and right in my life is from God and produced by God. I hope you understand that. It's not about me, it's about God; and everything wrong in my life is because of me, and everything right in my life is because of the grace of God. We need to reflect that. We need to let that be our testimony. And sometimes after a sermon, someone will come up and say, "That was an OK sermon," and I'll say, "You know what; wasn't that a

great passage of scripture? Wasn't God awesome in that text we looked at today?" because it's not about me, it's about God. I don't always pass that test, but I want to pass that test, and I want you to pass that test. I want Joseph's testimony to be your testimony: "It's not within me, it's from God."

So this leads us now to verse 17, "the depiction," and in verses 17 to 24 Pharaoh now relays the dream to Joseph. And because of time parameters that I have with this many verses, I'm not going to read these verses, because I've already read them once to you, verses 17 to 24. But let me tell you what stands out, because what this is is a virtual word for word verbatim reciting of the dream in verses 1-6. So verses 1-6 is the dream; and now here he recites to Joseph the dream. Here's what impresses me. He's able to do it virtually word for word. He wasn't taking notes, I mean he was asleep; you can't take notes when you're asleep. It was so real and it was so startling and it was so of another world, that it was etched in his mind as if it was chiseled in marble; he could not forget this dream, every detail of this dream. And so he now relays this to Joseph. He doesn't realize it, but he has had a close encounter with God, that God has broken through into his mind and into his psyche and has communicated to him what God is about to do, in him and in the nation. That's the way it should be when you sit under the word of God, and that's the way it should be when you read the word of God, and that should be the way it is when you're in a Bible study, that it's so real and it is so piercing and it's so penetrating, that it's just etched in your mind and you can't get it out of your mind, that you almost don't have to memorize scripture, because it has so taken hold of your mind and your heart, that when you open your mouth and you speak to others, that verse just comes flowing out of you because it's had such a deep impact in your life.

I want you to note, sixth, "the disclosure," in verse 25. Joseph now interprets the dream for Pharaoh by the insight that God gives him. So, verse 25, "Now Joseph said to Pharaoh, 'Pharaoh's dreams are one in the same,' - please note "dreams," plural, more than one - 'are one and the same.'" What does this mean? That the two dreams that God has given to Pharaoh say the same thing. They have the same meaning.

And why two? Why not just one? Well, the answer to that is, number one, to stress the certainty of its fulfillment, as "if you didn't get it the first time, let me give it to you the second time." And it's an emphatic underscoring of the certainty of it. It's almost like in the Bible when Jesus would say, "Simon, Simon." The repeating of it is for dramatic emphasis. Or when Jesus says, "Many will say unto Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not

prophecy on Your name and cast out demons in Your name and perform many wondrous works in Your name?" It's the longing: "Lord, Lord."

And so the repeating of this dream twice is for it to have a crashing impact upon Pharaoh, to break through and get through to Pharaoh, and the certainty of it, and how unalterable it is, that it's fixed in the eternal counsels and purposes of God. It is immutable and irrevocable. "Pharaoh's dreams are one and the same." And then he says, "God has spoken to Pharaoh what He" - God - "is about to do."

In the original language, when he says, "God," there's actually the definite article "the" in front of it, "the God," as to be in juxtaposition compared to all their gods (small g). There were untold numbers of gods that had been invented in the fallen, darkened minds of the Egyptians, and the land was plagued with all kinds of idols and gods (small g). But here, Joseph speaks of "the God," the God who has created everything, the God who controls everything, the God who is Lord over heaven and earth. "The God has spoken to you, Pharaoh, what He is about to do." And please note, he does not say what God is letting happen. No, God is the initiating cause of what is about to happen. God is not a mere spectator, God is the active participant, and this is what God will directly cause to happen.

Verse 26, "The seven good cows are the seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years," - referring to those seven years of plenty and prosperity; and he says - "and the dreams are one in the same." And "the seven years of plenty" is an expression of God's common grace goodness to all people. Here in this land of rank idolatry and all kinds of foreign gods and all the immorality that goes with it, nevertheless God pours out goodness upon Egypt. Just like Jesus said in Matthew 5, He causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust, He causes the sun to shine on the just and the unjust. It's the doctrine of common grace, that God is so good that He allows even unbelievers to participate in blessings of temporal life. He allows them to marry. He allows them to go to the doctor. He allows them to be healed. He allows them to go to school. He allows them to have a job, to be promoted, to build a house, to go on vacation, to appreciate the beauty of His creation. God is so good even to unbelievers. He's so good even to the animals. Job 38 and 39, "He feeds the animals." And so there will be seven years of plenty and prosperity, despite the debauchery of their false religions. God just continues to pour out His goodness upon them.

But, verse 27, "The seven lean in ugly cows" – which are sickly – "that came up after them are seven years." And the last word in verse 27 tells us what those seven years are. They are seven years of famine, and no doubt caused by devastating drought. And God can just seal up the heavens and there'd be no rain for as long as God would say there is no rain. And God is the God who can bring the rain, and God is the one who can prevent the rain, and He's Lord over it all. He's Lord over the hurricanes; He's Lord over the tornadoes; He's Lord over the earthquakes. He's got the whole world in His hand. And it is God who sends famine; it is God who sends droughts; it is God who controls the weather.

Verse 28, "It is as I have spoken the Pharaoh." That's the way a preacher talks, by the way. "It is as I have spoken to Pharaoh. God has shown to Pharaoh what He is about to do." And God can bring a nation down in a heartbeat. God can bring a mighty dynasty down in a night. And God has determined that He's going to bring down the mightiest empire on the earth, the Egyptian dynasty, if they do not do what God says to do.

So, verse 29, "Behold, seven years of great abundance are coming in all the land of Egypt." Verse 30, "After them seven years of famine will come. It will come with certainty, and all abundance will be forgotten in the land of Egypt, and the famine will ravage the land. If you do not take the precautionary steps that Joseph will be about to give, you will be eating dust for seven years."

Verse 31, "So the abundance will be unknown in the land." That means those seven years by contrast with the seven years of abundance, when contrasted with the seven years of famine, it will just be a vague memory in their in their minds, it will be forgotten, because they will be having to deal with what is exactly in front of them. At the end of verse 31, "It will be very severe." When God brings the hammer down, it's not a slight tap. He swings a sledgehammer, and it will be very severe. The word "very" means "exceedingly severe." The same Hebrew word is used for glory, "the glory of God," which means "Ichabod," which means "weight," "heavy." A great man is measured in the Old Testament by how much weight are his gold and silver, and it's carried over to God. How weighty is God, the immensity of God. Well here it has a different meaning: "How heavy and weighty will be the severity of this famine when God brings it upon the land of Egypt."

Verse 32, "Now as for the repeat of the dream to Pharaoh twice, it means – here's why He repeated it twice – "that the matter is determined by God,

not merely foreseen by God, but foreordained by God." "The matter is determined by God" means it's predetermined by God. This Hebrew word means that something is made firm, it is established, it is set, it is secured by the sovereign hand and will of God. It is unalterable, it is irrevocable, it is immutable; there are not enough forces on the earth or under the earth to reverse what God has determined He will do. This is the message that Joseph has for Pharaoh: "You may be King of Egypt, but you're not King of the universe." And at the end of verse 32, "and God will quickly bring it about." God is the cause, God is the aggressor, and it is God who will inflict this natural disaster that will affect the entirety of the land of Egypt. Makes you wonder, does it not, some of the natural disasters that occur on this planet - nothing randomly. God is the one who changes the climate to bring about natural disasters.

Well, finally - and I need to wrap this up - "the design," the end of the last verses. What's so amazing about these last verses - hang with me here just for a minute - that not only does Joseph interpret the dream, but he gives Pharaoh the plan. This is an amazing man. And before I read this, let me just say this: Joseph does not realize it at this point, but he is writing his own job description. He will be the fulfillment of this, unknown to him at this point. I mean, he started the day in prison; he had no idea he was coming out of prison. He had just enough time to shave and put on some clean clothes; and he shows up, he's got the game plan. That's how sharp he is, how brilliant he is, how ahead of everything that he is.

And so we read in verse 33, "Now let Pharaoh look for a man," a man who would be a single officer, who would be put in charge of the whole nation and sit beside Pharaoh and be, in essence, the Chief Operating Officer for the whole nation. "Let Pharaoh look for a man discerning" - that means with understanding and intelligence - "and wise," - skilled in sizing up situations and implementing plans - "and set him over the land of Egypt." He will sit at the right hand of Pharaoh, and he will be the make-it-happen man for the nation for what's about to happen.

Verse 34, "Let Pharaoh take action to appoint overseers in charge of the land." So this man will be over the overseers, and there will be a delegation and a dividing up of responsibilities, and this overseer will be in charge of this, and this overseer a part of this over that. But this man whom Pharaoh needs to appoint will be over the entire operation. And so what we read here is, verse 34, "Let him exact a fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven years of abundance. So, for these seven years of plenty, one-fifth of all the crops, one-fifth of all the food needs to be partialled off, set aside,

guarded, so that in the seven years of famine, we will have enough food to survive through the difficult times that are coming." So, Joseph has not only a negative message, he has a positive message. He not only announces the problem, he announces the solution.

The last church I pastored, I would say at our staff meetings, "You can bring any problem you want to the staff meeting, just be sure to bring the solution with you. Don't just dump all your problems, give me the solution to the problem." That's what Joseph is doing here.

So, we read in verse 35, "Then let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and store up the grain for food in the cities under Pharaoh's authority, and let them guard it. Let the food become as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land will not perish during the famine." Here's the message: "Pharaoh, if you don't do this, Egypt will be wiped from the face of the earth; there will be no Egypt. We will never survive seven years eating dirt." He doesn't say it, but, in essence, "We will be the second coming of Sodom and Gomorrah. There will be none of us left. If you do not pursue God's plan for this, we can't survive, unless we follow this plan." The word "perish" here in verse 36 means "to be cut off," it means "to be like an arm is amputated from a body." "We will literally be cut off and amputated from the face of the earth, if we do not do this." Joseph spoke very boldly, because he says this in days when things are looking pretty good in Egypt.

Verse 37, "Now the proposal seemed good the Pharaoh and to all his servants." There's various messages for us. We find ourselves living in a nation of great prosperity; and who knows what adversity is around the corner. How wise we would be to save for the future and not be in debt, and not be obligated, but to have a reserve for whatever lies ahead for this nation. But more than anything else, as we have looked at this today, we have not looked at this looking for Pharaoh or Joseph; we have seen, first and foremost, it was God who was acting in Pharaoh's life, it was God who was acting in Joseph's life.

So my question for you and for me today is, "Where is God at work in your life today, you? How is God at work in your life? How today is God building you up? How is God shaping and conforming you into the image of His Son? How is God convicting you? How is God challenging you? How is

God assuring you? How is God upholding you? How is God at work in your life? How is God directing you? How is God providing for you?"

If you're a Christian, "God is at work within you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure," Philippians 2:13. And so my last question is, "Is God in you?" because He's only in believers. He makes His abode in our heart and in our soul. The God who has created everything lives inside of His people, and our bodies become the temple of God in which He dwells.

If God is not in your life, there's only one way for God to be in your life, and that is for you to commit your life to His Son Jesus Christ who died upon the cross for sinners. And if you would repent of your sin, deny yourself, take up a cross and begin to follow Christ, then God would be mightily at work in your life. God is never passive in anyone's life, God is always dynamically active in every believer's life. God is never sitting on the bench, God is always in the middle of the arena of your life at work, doing His job to make you more like His Son Jesus Christ. God was doing that in Joseph's life. May He be at work in your life this day. Let us pray; and as we pray, I will dismiss you with this benediction.

[Prayer] "Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight," - Did you hear that? - "working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen." God bless you.