

## LESSON 4



## JOSEPH INTERPRETS DREAMS

**Scripture Texts:** *Genesis 40:1-23; 2 Peter 1:20-21*

From previous lessons we can see that God was watching over Joseph. He was with him. He prospered his work. He enabled him to do right in spite of temptation to evil. The dreams are not yet fulfilled, but Joseph as a type of Christ is seen in the fact that Joseph was tempted and did not yield to the temptation. Jesus was tempted by Satan and did not yield (Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 4:15).

**MEMORY VERSE:** *"I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies."*

*Psalm 18:3*

### Interpretations Belong to God

**Genesis 40:1-8** Joseph was an overseer of Pharaoh's prisoners, of which he himself was one. Two prisoners brought in and placed in Joseph's charge were Pharaoh's butler and his baker. Each of these men dreamed the same night. They were troubled by the dreams. Noticing their sad faces, Joseph inquired the reason. They said they had dreamed and there was no interpreter. From that it would appear that dreams with meaning were more frequent at that time, or that these people were superstitiously practicing the interpretation of dreams. Or, since God did send these dreams, as we later learn, perhaps He filled these men with desire for an interpretation. At least, they did desire it. **"Do not interpretations belong to God?"** asked Joseph. He claimed no power in himself, but looked to God for it.

He asked to hear the dreams.

**Genesis 40:9-11** The butler told his dream of a grapevine. He saw the whole process from budding to ripe grapes, to the pouring of the juice into Pharaoh's cup. (The butler was a manservant in charge of wines and liquors).

**Genesis 40:12-15 This is the interpretation.** From Joseph's statement that interpretations belong to God, we know that he looked to Him for the interpretation. **The three branches are three days.** In three days the butler was to be taken from the prison and restored to his position as Pharaoh's butler.

Then Joseph made a request of the butler: "Will you mention me to Pharaoh? Will you tell him how I was stolen out of the land of the Hebrews (was sold by those who had no right to sell) and was innocent of the crime for which I was imprisoned? Will you ask Pharaoh to release me from the prison?" We find no promise that the butler would do so.

**Genesis 40:16-19** Encouraged by the happy meaning of the butler's dream, the baker told his. Joseph interpreted his dream also. Even though it was unfavorable to the baker, Joseph's interpretation was as honest and sincere as was his interpretation to the butler. A true man of God will tell it as it is, regardless of the result to the hearer.

Interpretations belong to God. Joseph here voiced a principle which should be universally known and followed. God, being the Almighty Creator, knows the meaning of all things. What man should know, God can tell him. When God sends a dream or a prophecy, He is the only One who can explain it. It is useless, and certainly wrong, to turn to mediums, fortune tellers, or purely human sources for the meaning. They can give only a guess which is of no value, or the answer of an evil spirit which is dangerous, even though it may be laced with some element of truth. Some truth mixed with erroneous teaching causes it to be more deceptive and dangerous. If God actually sent the

message, He will reveal to us the meaning if we look to Him for it.

**2 Peter 1:20-21** When God gives us a doctrine, the interpretation of it belongs to Him. He has given us both doctrines and explanations in the Bible. He tells us that **no prophecy** (a message from God to man) **of the scripture is of any private interpretation.** For it **came not . . . by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.** The attempt to make private interpretations is the cause of the multitude of denominations today, each with its different shade of doctrine. Each may be drawn from the Bible, but changed by varied interpretation.

If we would remember that **interpretations belong to God** and would go to His inspired Word for the explanation of doctrine, we would have much more vital teaching and greater unity.

**Genesis 40:20-23** Anyone could make such predictions. But will they come true? The proof is the outcome. **And it came to pass . . . Pharaoh celebrated his birthday the third day after the dreams. He gave a feast for his servants. He sent for his butler and baker to be brought from prison. He did exactly as Joseph had predicted. He restored the chief butler unto his butlership again . . . he hanged the chief baker.** The only reason for this is that God sent the dreams. God gave the interpretations.

### Trusting in God

As we look at Joseph, we may wonder how he stayed righteous in spite of continual hardship and discouragement. What gave him courage and strength? It was his trust in God. His was not a vague, nominal trust, but a living one. It controlled his thinking and his actions. His first thought was not to try to figure things out for himself. He turned immediately to God because his trust was in Him. And God did not fail him.

Why do we so often turn first to earthly resources, to men, medicine, the law, friends, our reasoning, striving in our strength only to fail? Because we do not trust in God.

### Gratitude

Now it is well with the butler. Now he can repay Joseph's kindness by speaking to Pharaoh in his favor. But he did no. He forgot him. Joseph is left in prison. The butler probably meant to present Joseph's case to Pharaoh, but he was so absorbed in his own affairs that another's trouble did not affect him deeply. The fact is that he was not grateful. Gratitude is a necessary virtue in the making of a complete Christian character. Gratitude is thankfulness joined with a desire to benefit those who have benefitted us. First to God and then to all those who have helped bless our lives is our gratitude due. The love of God in the heart makes gratitude a natural feeling. Then the thought and the will join in gratitude's fulfillment.

## JUST A THOUGHT

**Formula for failure: Try to please everybody.**