

Joseph Smith's Last Three Dreams

Two Sinking boats & a Dilapidated Barn

Prophets like Daniel and Joseph sold into Egypt had the gift of seership. They could see past, present, and future. They had dreams and could interpret them well with the Spirit. The Prophet Joseph Smith was also a gifted seer. In the final weeks of his life, he had three highly symbolic dreams. The first of these prophetic dreams was *four months prior to his death* and involved a *sinking steamboat*. Then *two days before his death* he had another *sinking steamboat* dream. Finally, the *night before his death*, while in Carthage jail, the Prophet Joseph Smith had his last dream, one about a barn he built on his land in Kirtland. It had become dilapidated, various people fighting over it. Joseph got *out of the barn* in his dream and *out of the two sinking boats* (one was on fire), thus preserving his life in all three dreams. What do they mean?

Joseph's Two Dreams about a Sinking Boat

Steamboat Dream 1 In early February 1844, *four months prior to his death*, Joseph Smith had a dream, which he related to Wilford Woodruff, Willard Richards, and W. W. Phelps. He stated, "I was standing on a peninsula, in the midst of a vast body of water where there appeared to be a large harbor or pier built out for boats to come to. I was surrounded by my friends, and while looking at this harbor I saw a steamboat approaching the harbor. There were bridges on the pier for persons to cross, and there came up a wind and drove the steamboat under one of the bridges and upset it. I ran up to the boat, expecting the persons would all drown; and wishing to do something to assist them, I put my hand against the side of the boat, and with one surge I shoved it under the bridge and righted it up, and then told them to take care of themselves. But it was not long before I saw them starting out into the channel or main body of the water again. The *storms were raging* and the waters rough. I said to my friends that *if they did not understand the signs of the times and the spirit of prophecy, they would be apt to be lost*. It was but a few moments after when we saw the waves break over the boat, and *she soon foundered and went down with all on board*. The storm and waters were still very rough; yet I told my friends around me that I believed I could stem those waves and that storm, and swim in the waters better than the steamboat did; at any rate I was determined to try it. *But my friends laughed at me, and told me I could not stand at all, but would be drowned*. The waters looked clear and beautiful, though exceedingly rough; and I said I believed I could swim, and I would try it anyhow. *They said I would drown*. I said I would have a frolic in the water first, if I did; and I drove off in the raging waves. I had swam but a short distance when a towering wave overwhelmed me for a time; but I soon found myself on the top of it, and soon I met the second wave in the same way; and for a while I struggled hard to live in the midst of the storm and waves, and soon found I gained upon every wave, and skimmed the torrent better; and I soon had power to swim with my head out of water: so the waves did not break over me at all, and *I found that I had swam a great distance; and in looking about, I saw my brother Samuel by my side*. I asked him how he liked it. He said, "First rate," and I thought so too. I was soon enabled to swim with my head and shoulders out of water, and I could swim as fast as any steamboat. In a little time it became calm, and I could rush through the water, and only go in to my loins, and soon I only went in to my knees, and finally could tread on the top of the water, and went almost with the speed of an arrow. I said to Samuel, See how swift I can go! I thought it was great sport and pleasure to travel with such speed, and I awoke" (Joseph Smith, History of the Church, 6:194–95, bold & italics added).

Steamboat Dream 2 *Two nights before his death*, on the way to Carthage Jail, Joseph dreamed that *he and Hyrum boarded a large steamboat*. It was anchored some distance from shore in a small bay near the ocean. *The boat caught fire. Their only escape was to leap into the water*. Edited versions of this dream often leave out the fiery sinking ship portion of his dream, concentrating instead on the later portion of the dream. The youtube video on Seth Smith's website (where this dream is featured) does *not include the fiery sinking steamboat, for example*. Addressing Joseph Smith's second steamboat dream in 1862, W.W. Phelps, stated, "In June 1844, when Joseph Smith went to Carthage and delivered himself up to Governor Ford, I (W. W. Phelps) accompanied him, and while on the way thither, he related to me and his brother Hyrum the following dream. He (Joseph) said: 'While I was at Jordan's in Iowa the other night, *I dreamed that myself and my brother's Hyrum went on board a steamboat* lying in a small bay, near the great ocean. *Shortly after we went on board there was an alarm of fire*, and I discovered that the boat had been anchored some distance from the shore, out in the bay, and that *an escape from the fire*, in the confusion, appeared hazardous: but, as delay was folly, *Hyrum and I jumped overboard...On looking towards the burning boat in the east, we saw that it was drifting towards the wharf and the town, with a great flame and clouds of smoke; and, as if by whirlwind, the town was taking fire, too, so that the scene of destruction and horror of the frightened inhabitants were terrible*. We proceeded on the bosom of the mighty deep and were soon out of sight of land. The ocean was still; the rays of the sun were bright and we forgot all the troubles of our mother earth. Just at that moment I heard the sound of a human voice, and turning around, saw my brother SamH. approaching towards us from the east. We stopped and he came up. After a moment's conversation he informed me that he had been lonesome back there, and *he had made up his mind to go with me across the mighty deep*. We all started again, and in a short time were blest with the first sight of a city, whose gold and silver steeples and towers were more beautiful than any I had ever seen or heard of on earth. It stood, as it were, upon the western shore of the mighty deep we were

walking on, and its order and glory seemed far beyond the wisdom of man. While we were gazing upon the perfection of the city a small boat launched off from the port, and, almost as quick as thought, came to us. In an instant they took us on board and saluted us with a welcome, and with music such as is not on earth. The next scene, on landing, was more than I can describe; the greeting of old friends, the music from a thousand towers, and the light of God Himself at the return of three of His sons, soothed my soul into a quite and a joy that I felt as if I was truly in heaven. I gazed upon the splendor; I greeted my friends. I awoke, and lo, it was a dream. [Elder Phelps added] "I will say that Joseph never told this dream again, as he was martyred about two days after. I related from recollection as nearly as I can." (Quote of Joseph Smith's dream by W.W. Phelps, in Marlene Bateman Sullivan, *By the Ministering of Angels*, pps. 44-45, , bold & italics added. Note, though W.W. Phelps wrote this dream down in 1862, and entitled it, "*Joseph Smith's Last Dream*," it was actually the second to last dream. His final dream was of his barn in Kirtland (below), with men fighting for ownership of it.)

The Dilapidated Barn Joseph Smith's last dream occurred on June 26, 1844 while he was in the Carthage Jail, *the last night of the Prophet's life*. He was killed the next day, June 27. The Prophet Joseph stated, "I was back in Kirtland, Ohio, and thought I would take a walk out by myself, and view ***my old farm, which I found grown up with weeds and brambles, and altogether bearing evidence of neglect and want of culture***. I went into the barn, which I found ***without floor or doors***, with the weather - boarding off, and was altogether in keeping with the farm. While I viewed the ***desolation*** around me, and was contemplating how it might be recovered from ***the curse upon it***, there came rushing into the barn a company of ***furious men, who commenced to pick a quarrel with me***. The leader of the party ordered me to leave the barn and farm, stating ***it was none of mine, and that I must give up all hope of ever possessing it***. I told him the farm was given me by the Church, and although I had not had any use of it for some time back, still I had not sold it, and ***according to righteous principles it belonged to me or the Church***. He then grew furious and began to rail upon me, and threaten me, and said it never did belong to me nor to the Church. ***I then told him that I did not think it worth contending about, that I had no desire to live upon it in its present state***, and if he thought he had a better right I would not quarrel with him about it but leave; but my assurance that I would not trouble him at present did not seem to satisfy him, as he seemed determined to quarrel with me, and threatened me with destruction of my body. While he was thus engaged, pouring out his bitter words upon me, ***a rabble rushed in and nearly filled the barn, drew out their knives, and began to quarrel among themselves for the premises***, and for a moment forgot me, at which time I took the opportunity to walk out of the barn about up to my ankles in mud. When I was a little distance from the barn, I heard them screeching and screaming in a very distressed manner, as it appeared they had engaged in a general fight with their knives. While they were thus engaged, the dream or vision ended" (Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:609–10, bold & italics added).

Dream Interpretation

Dreams can be interpreted in many ways. Gifted ones like Daniel and Joseph of the Old Testament, did so using the Spirit. Some see Joseph's last three dreams as a way for him to escape his enemies emotionally, overcoming them in the end. Others see a more ominous meaning in them in connection with our day - the current state of things. All of us interpret things from our own perspective and experience, like Peter's attempt to go to the Savior, *where he get out of the boat and went to Him*. Some see Peter's failure. Others see his faith in leaving the comfort of the boat to go to the Lord. Knowing the truth of dreams, from God's perspective, gives us a great advantage.

Walking on Water In the New Testament, Peter impulsively leapt out of the boat and tried to walk on water - to get to Jesus, only to sink - but eventually be saved by the Master. He was mildly chastised for his lack of faith. Many only see the negative in Peter's attempt to get to the Master and his supposed lack of faith. What is more important is that he *desired* to be with Him, and left the safety of the boat to do so. Joseph and Hyrum also did this, jumping from a steamboat and into the water in both dreams to save their lives. They sank to their knees in the water for at time, but their faith increased and they were soon able to walk upon the water. Their reward was that they made it to the Master. They did not sink in the burning, sinking ship they left behind. For some, staying in the boat is not always the best decision.

Modern Ties to the Farm While some see Joseph overcoming traitors in his final three dreams, others see in them trouble for our day - trouble by staying in the boat or "the box" with an "*all is well*" complacency, when trouble is all around. The farm in Joseph's dream was *his* property. D&C 90:3 states: "Verily I say unto you, the keys of this kingdom shall never be taken from you, while thou art in the world, neither in the world to come." Joseph built the barn. It had no floor or doors in the dream. Some tie the floor of the barn to its foundation. In the New Testament, the foundation of the barn or church was and Prophets and Apostles. D&C 64:39 states: "And liars and hypocrites shall be proved by them, and they who are not apostles and prophets shall be known." D&C 50:4, 6 adds: "Behold, I, the Lord, have looked upon you, and have seen abominations in the church that profess my name. But wo unto them that are deceivers and hypocrites, for, thus saith the Lord, I will bring them to judgment." With no doors on the barn, weeds and brambles can come in. Jesus spoke of them in Matthew 13:22. "He also that received seed among the thorns [weeds and brambles] is he that heareth the

word; And the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." Moroni said it more pointedly. Speaking of the last-days and what he saw, he stated, "O ye pollutions, ye hypocrites, ye teachers, who sell yourselves for that which will canker, why have ye polluted the holy church of God? Why are ye ashamed to take upon you the name of Christ? Why do ye not think that greater is the value of an endless happiness than that misery which never dies—because of the praise of the world? (Mormon 8:38).

Jumping into the water from the sinking boats, one of them on fire, provided salvation for Joseph Smith in his dreams. He also escaped the old barn and its agitated, dangerous men. Lehi and his family left Jerusalem for similar reasons – their own welfare, and to raise up righteous seed on this land, away from the influences of spiritual Egypt and Babylon that were taking hold in Jerusalem. Seeing our day, Bishop John Koyle addressed three leaders who would die in rapid succession in the last-days as a sign of trouble. He said, "Near the time of the end, many of the General Authorities will become quite old. Troubles will start when three leaders will die in close proximity to one another. The new replacements will not be able to hold the Church together." On September 22nd of 2015, the eve of the Day of Atonement, the start day for *the Jubilee Year of Restoration*, Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve died. His death followed that of Elder L. Tom Perry (May 30th, 2015) and Elder Boyd K. Packer (July 3, 2015), all dying within five months.

What do these things mean?