



## Dreams Without Content

by Dale Fincher

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When Andrew Lloyd Webber wrote *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* he had no idea that it would be the beginning of an illustrious career.

Despite its Las Vegas style flashiness, the musical, which debuted in 1968 as a fifteen minute cantata, is an attempt to tell the story of Joseph from the pages of Genesis.

It is a remarkable story of the ironic twist of God's sovereignty. He is always bringing his plans together, even through the dark mysteries of evil.

Through the obstacles of this biblical story, Joseph was keen to point out that prophetic dreams and interpretations come from God alone in order for people act on them. Even Pharaoh recognized this when he met Joseph and was convinced enough to trust Joseph with his whole country.

You would not get this idea of personal providence from Webber's musical. From the opening songs, the source of dreams in the story is turned upon its head. They do not originate from God; they originate from man:

I closed my eyes, drew back the curtain  
To see for certain what I thought I knew  
Far far away, someone was weeping  
But the world was sleeping  
Any dream will do...

...May I return to the beginning  
The light is dimming, and the dream is too  
The world and I, we are still waiting  
Still hesitating  
Any dream will do

When modern man begins to tell the story of Joseph, one quickly gets the idea that it isn't a matter of where the dream comes from. It's only a matter of having a dream. It isn't about content; it's about wishful optimism of what may be in the future.

When the animated movie *Prince of Egypt* was released on the story of Moses, a similar sound came through after the Red Sea was parted.

There can be miracles  
When you believe  
Though hope is frail  
It's hard to kill  
Who knows what miracles  
You can achieve  
When you believe somehow you will  
You will when you believe

The song is beautifully sung and many of the lyrics are theologically accurate. But there is a subtle shift in the chorus that is hard to detect unless you listen closely. "Who knows what miracles YOU can achieve when you believe" (emphasis mine). It moves the focus away from the Miracle-Worker and places it on the subjective experience of the person wishing for a miracle to happen.

The twist we see in these popular arts mediums is nothing new to modern spirituality. Francis Schaeffer made an important remark on this. He is referring to the modern materialistic view of the universe and suggests that if all that exists is nature, then the only thing that can help us feel good is so-called "faith." He says, "Modern man is a mystic with nobody there. The old mystics always said that there

was somebody there, but the new mystic says that that does not matter, because faith is the important thing.... The leap is the thing and not the terms in which the leap is expressed.... Modern man is committed to finding his answer... by a leap, away from rationality and away from reason."

Do you hear what he is saying? In divorcing ourselves from reason in modern times, we have accepted the idea of "faith" grounded in nothing. But biblical faith is grounded in something. Defined, faith is the abiding trust in the character of God. Any dream will not do! Simple belief will not produce miracles! It is only when we align ourselves with God, not engaging in wishful thinking, that all things do work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purposes.

Let the content of his promises and work, not our whims, be our confidence today.

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