

The Word of God, Dreams and Visions

Throughout the Scriptures there are warnings about dreams, visions and false prophets. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind..." (Col 2:18). Paul should know; he himself experienced a spectacular conversion experience, had visions of angels and wrote of other supernatural events like the one he reported in Acts 16:6. He and Timothy were passing through the Phrygian and Galatian region, they were personally forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the Word in Asia. Yet he warns us about making too much of these sort of things because there is a strong possibility that we could become puffed up by our own "fleshly" minds. In other words, even with a God given vision, we must be careful to remember that the flesh loves to be religious.

This correspondence concerns a vision that a woman had last year. It was sent to me by a friend who remembers me through her earlier association with a Jesus Movement Church in Santa Cruz. My first impulse was, "I don't have time for this", but as I thought and prayed about answering her email, I reread the vision and was struck by its tone of gentle assurance and could find nothing that would make me think that it was merely made up. Don't get me wrong, I don't think this is a description of how it will be in heaven nor is it the Word of God in the way that Peter's vision on the roof top is. If anyone finds fault with it please let me know as you are supposed to do according to 1 Cor.14:29.

Because some of you might not care to read it, I have placed the text of the vision at the end of this email exchange about dreams and visions.

Ted

I came across this vision and thought it might be encouraging and insightful for you. Tell me what you think of visions.

TK

Dear TK,

Thank you for sending me such interesting things from time to time. On this occasion a passage of scripture came into my mind, well, actually two. One from the Old Testament and one from 1 Corinthians. Please accept what I say in the spirit that I send it. I have been reading a lot of Internet posted accounts of various phenomena that different groups report as God goes about doing what ever it is He is doing these days. There is something that puzzles me about most of them. At first I thought maybe I had just miss-read them. However, I have an email program that can search for words and strings of words or just one word in a bunch of different email. I began searching for words like, "Jesus", "saved" and "Christ", hoping to find reports that read, "...and in the midst of this wonderful outpouring, a large (or small) number of people came to Jesus...". I am sad to report that most of the time a little box pops up on my screen and says, "no Jesus found". I keep wondering what happened to evangelism? Do you remember the days not too long ago when people were coming to the Lord every day? Is there too much "come and get it" and not enough "go and get them" going on?

Hmmm! Actually what I started out to say concerned two texts that came to mind upon reading what you asked me about visions.

The first:

"And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets." (1 Cor 14:29-32).

I have observed that "the others" have been remiss in the "pass judgement" part of this text. Incidentally the word "judge" is *diakrinw*: It means to distinguish, to judge or decide, to discern. In other words, to decide if the word is from God or not. The speaker or the person who speaks forth does not get to decide the validity issue on their own. Nor are they compelled to speak. According to what Paul wrote, the forth-teller can patiently wait their turn because the Spirit will enable them to be interrupted should God speak through another and perhaps say, "Please stop talking, what you are quoting is fine, but we have a news flash from our Father..." This just in, 'Some of you are not prophets'.

The second, from the Old Testament, is a warning from Jeremiah and was spoken during a time when the land was filled with false prophets who were preaching an "everything is just fine" message in a day when repentance was greatly needed.

(Jer 23:25-27) "I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy falsely in My name, saying, 'I had a dream, I had a dream!' 'How long? Is there anything in the hearts of the prophets who prophesy falsehood, even these prophets of the deception of their own heart, who intend to make My people forget My name by their dreams which they relate to one another, just as their fathers forgot My name because of Baal?"

TK, to forget God's name is to forget God. To the people of Jeremiah's time, God's name totally described Him. Hence, His name was Him. His name was regarded as so holy that they didn't dare write it down even if they could. God is His Word. As the Apostle John wrote, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". False prophesy is therefore a false god, an idol, like Baal.

(Jer 23:28-32) "The prophet who has a dream may relate his dream, but let him who has My word speak My word in truth. What does straw have in common with grain?" declares the LORD. 'Is not My word like fire?' declares the LORD, 'and like a hammer which shatters a rock?' 'Therefore behold, I am against the prophets,' declares the LORD, 'who steal My words from each other.' Behold, I am against the prophets,' declares the LORD, 'who use their tongues and declare, 'The Lord declares.' 'Behold, I am against those who have prophesied false dreams," declares the LORD, 'and related them, and led My people astray by their falsehoods and reckless boasting; yet I did not send them or command them, nor do they furnish this people the slightest benefit,' declares the LORD."

God's people were not distinguishing what was a dream and what was the Word of God. If a dream was about God and kind of mysterious, some of the people would tell it as though it was a prophesy from the Lord. Like the passage in Corinthians, Jeremiah goes on to say that those who heard these "dreams" were to speak up and ask if they were from God or not. God said one can indeed, "tell a dream", but the teller and the hearer must make sure they are clear about what is a dream and what is the Word of God.

I'm amazed by these two passages. I had forgotten they had so much in common. I am reminded that we, the hearers of supposed prophecies, have always had the responsibility to judge what was being said and even to confront those who speak, so as to force the issue and bring it into the light. "Is it a dream or is it the Word of God?"

Lately, I have been listening more carefully. People are saying all kinds of things I know can't possibly be from God. It's not like they are talking about somebody that I don't know. Do you know what I mean? When one has known Jesus awhile, one, well, knows Him. Just like any other close friend. "His sheep know His voice..". that sort of thing. Of course I check the Bible too. There is just too much "dream" telling going on and we have completely neglected to judge what is being said. Let's start asking, "Is that a dream or the word of God?"

The two passages of Scripture I quoted are the Word of God. They are most definitely not a dream.

Ted

Part Two:

Dear Ted,

Thanks so much for em-mailing back and the grace-filled way you chose to respond. I want to re-read your response again to get the 'jist of it. Upon first reading I felt it was open, honest and kind. Thanks Ted. Let's start asking, "Is that a dream or the Word of God?...."

TK

Dear sister TK, thanks for the response and the encouragement. I wanted to avoid addressing the vision, in part, because visions always disturb me. Not because I think they are false, although Paul's warnings make most of them either suspect or of a highly personal nature. This particular vision did produce some good fruit. Look what has happened by way of the few verses from the Bible that I sent you: you are asking me about what I wrote, exactly as those verses tell us to do. Please allow me to answer the rest of your question in parts for the sake of clarity.

I look and long for the day when this current move of God matures into people getting "out of the box" of structure and "churchanity" and moves onto the highways and byways with Jesus' name being proclaimed! I do not hear much of our Lord Jesus' name, and it grieves me. Is this because it is not Him, or is it because so many are just becoming familiar with the Holy Spirit and are preoccupied with Him?

In the beginning of the Jesus movement, Lonnie Frisbee, whom you know about, and the rest of us, did as we thought the Lord wanted us to do. Some of our adventures aren't mentioned in the histories of the Jesus Movement. We went to an awful lot of churches and gave our testimonies, I'm sure it was in the hundreds. It was almost as if they were deaf. They couldn't really hear us. Mostly they would say something like, "...that's nice, why don't you cut your hair?" Or, the thing that shocked me the most, they wanted to hear all about our sins, not our salvation. I once sarcastically told a nude dancer whom we had lead to the Lord that I could get her on the testimony circuit doing her former dance. Fortunately she didn't hear me.

I am faulty and afraid, but how my heart burns for God to move into the streets - No - God is in the streets, it's the church that must go there with Him and declare His hope and salvation there! He will do it without us, just like He did in the Jesus Movement,

So were we; faulty and afraid, but after a period of prayer and bible study we decided that perhaps we were to do as Jesus said in one of His parables:

"...Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. 'Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast.' And those slaves went out into the streets, and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests..." (Mat 22:8-10).

That's exactly what we did, we really went out on the highways. It was after hitchhiking down to Southern California that Lonnie and Connie Frisbee felt that the Lord wanted to use them there. Isn't it amazing that the press began referring to the people we witnessed to as "street people", and Haight street was certainly a high-way. I think that a lot of the same traditional church people are still saying they are too busy to come to

the wedding feast of the Lamb. We must not lose sight of what our forefathers in the faith called the great commission, "He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.'" (Acts 1:7-8).

Would you feel free to tell me how you see this particular "vision" and your perspective? If you'd rather not, please feel no obligation.

I believe that S. had a wonderful vision, but it is not like Steven's vision in the book of Acts. No one will write it down as the Word of God. I'll take your word that she is a fine Christian sister. This means that God will teach her and perhaps the rest of us through her vision. Even if it is a "dream" and not the Word of God, it doesn't mean it is without value. Some friend of hers probably needs, as Jeremiah exhorts, to ask her if it is the Word and if it is just for her. I think and pray a while before I share a dream with the Body. I think there are too many people telling dreams and kind of hinting that because they are sort of spooky they're from God. Bringing things to the light will make them light. "But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light." (Eph 5:13).

Ted

On with the show:

With the word from God concerning dreams and visions firmly in mind, I would like to share with you this rather lovely vision that a sister in Christ had while tooling down highway 5 in the California heartland. I do not know the woman personally but I have contacted other brothers and sisters in Christ who say she is a fine Christian woman. I don't detect anything inflated about her in the telling of her experience. What I love about this vision is how personal it seems. It is obviously colored from the pallet of her own life. First, it unfolds in a children's story book setting. Then it moves on through the painful adolescent fears of gym class nakedness and on to adulthood with its attendant self-image problems. It is even personal enough to assure her and us that there are no bad hair days in heaven. Jesus is wonderful.

For those of you who have the freedom to judge S's vision, please feel free to write to me. I will forward your comments.

Ted Wise

A Vision of The Preparation of the Bride

From: S.

As Posted: New-Wine 3/98

While driving along the freeway, a long, straight stretch of I-5 in central California, late at night, in 8/97, a vision began to open up before me. It was unlike any other vision I had ever seen before. It just opened up before me, in my mind, even as I was driving the car and my family slept. Instead of being distracted by it, I actually became more alert and aware of driving, while at the same time totally enthralled by the drama I was entering into.

I saw a castle in the distance, with a drawbridge. It was beautiful, with green rolling hills; pastoral country, as you would imagine parts of England in an earlier time. I had been invited as an honored guest to a castle off in the distance. I was riding on a white horse. As I approached the bridge I was warmly greeted by the guards. They graciously asked me to get off my horse. They were going to take care of it and I needed to trust them

with it. I understood that the horse represented my gifts and my self-identity; could I relinquish what gave me worth in the view of the church, the world, and myself? I felt immediately, though with a bit of a twinge of relinquishment, that I could trust them and that they knew better than I how to take care of my beloved horse, anyway.

Then, I came to understand that I had been invited in order to meet the King. But first, I needed to be prepared. It reminded me of the Wizard of Oz story. I was going to be prepared to meet Him just like Dorothy and her companions were. There were many "beings" around me, in appearance like 12-year old children, but I could not determine whether they were male or female. They seemed at once wise, compassionate, accepting, fun-loving, respectful and much older than they appeared. I believe they were angels. I instantly felt I could trust them and felt peaceful and at ease. I was led into a series of different rooms.

In the first room I was to be bathed. The angels waited on me, taking my clothes off. I had no sense of embarrassment. In our flesh-oriented society I might have sensed ridicule, comparisons, etc., at the sight of my silly, naked body. But these beings...cherished me, cared for me as a mother would lovingly hold and care for her own child's body. They blessed my body because I was wonderfully and carefully created. I stepped into the bathtub and they began washing me from top to bottom. The angels were in awe of me...in the sense that they were so pleased at this unique creation of the Lord of the universe. So many feelings washed over me...my senses alive...the sweet perfumed soapy fragrance, the gentleness of their hands, the delicacy of the water. I was washed so clean; cleansed in every pore. I stepped out to be dried off with the softest of towels.

I was taken to another chamber...still naked but somehow not ashamed.

And I sensed that in my nakedness they also knew who I was, through and through. I had no need to explain myself, nor even a desire to do so.

I was now taken to a chamber to have my hair done. I sensed I could choose to either tell them how I wanted it done, or I could leave the style, color, length, etc. up to them. Somehow, I lost any desire to tell them what I thought would look best. What I wanted, at that moment, was to totally trust their judgement. Now, in our society there is a profound vanity when it comes to our hair. Our hair is "ruined" if it is not cut, curled, dyed just right. We insist on going only to hairdressers we can trust. Personally, I don't think I'm excessively concerned about my hair, but I do have an idea of what I think looks good and what doesn't. But it was sooo easy just to let go of this vanity and trust them absolutely with however my hair might turn out. I didn't even care...it mattered much more to me just to trust myself to their loving ministrations.

Then...time to select clothing. In this I had a choice. My sense, as I looked around, was that all the garments were beautiful...satiny, flowing, exquisite colors. But they did not call attention to themselves or their wearer. It seemed more that you would stand out by wearing normal street clothes; these were pure, wholesome clothes that allowed you to fit in, merge, become just as beautiful as everyone else, while being released from judgement or comparing of all the other clothes (and wearers of the clothes). The garment I chose was a pale, satiny robe over a multi-colored, pastel, flowing dress. I was, I sensed, now "clothed in righteousness". The purpose of the clothes was not to flatter the wearer, but in a corporate sense to add to and complement the whole group. It was like the bridesmaids and groomsmen at a wedding; not standing out as individuals but as a beautiful frame for the bride and groom.

At some point I was handed a small harp to play. I was taken to a room and taught how to play a few simple notes. I was a little concerned about what I was supposed to do with it. I was told that I would be taught what I needed to know, and that this would be enough for now.

Then, it was time to go the throne room. At the door I saw two soldiers/guards. They asked me to relinquish all weapons of offense or defense. I was shocked! I hadn't really realized I was lugging a bag of such things...weapons of self-protection, blame, excuse, explanation, jealousy and judgement; these were all things I had been lugging around the world with me, they seemed so essential there. But here, in the throne room, there was no need of them. I needed to let them go. I felt a little embarrassed, but the guards were quite matter-of-fact and clearly expected to collect such things from everyone who came from the outside.

Then, I entered the throne room. It was a large, vaulted room, with beautiful chandeliers. Before I realized what was happening, I became aware that I was being escorted by the Holy Spirit. It seemed so natural to be on His arm! He was like an old, trusted friend, there to fellowship with me and help me feel comfortable. I cannot say what He looked like..it was enough to just be with Him. I was so at ease, yet so excited. Anticipation was pulsating in the room. We got into a receiving line, to meet the King and His Son. There were many other couples ahead of us, standing in line to meet Him. They were seated in thrones against the far wall. I was overwhelmed with a sense of being *sooooo* honored just to be there. What an incredible privilege. Why me? What had I done to ever deserve this? As we made our way to the front, I could see the Father greeting each one warmly, each one as a special, unique, treasured guest. Each one was enjoyed, appreciated individually. Yet, somehow, I was aware also of no one being preferred over another. The Father would then introduce each one to the Son by His side. I felt so flustered, excited I could hardly contain myself. I can hardly remember anything of being introduced I was so moved! Yet I also sensed how much the Father wanted each one of us to meet the Son, I mean REALLY meet the Son, for who He is. He took such delight to introduce us...like saying, "see, this is the One who did it all...He is the One reason we are all here..." I felt such an increased awareness of how it all fit together...how I, and each one of us fit into the grand scheme.

I can't even describe what it was like for me, when I finally got my chance to greet Him. The focus was really on meeting the Son. It was like the Father was really deferring to the Son; this was a party thrown in His honor. I can't describe what they looked like; perhaps my emotions overtook me, I'm not sure. I was primarily aware of the Father's pleasure in FINALLY getting to introduce us all, face to face, to His beloved Son. I cannot describe the features of their faces...but I can describe love, joy, peace, acceptance, forgiveness, compassion, kindness, mercy, holiness, righteousness. How can you really put words to such Beings?

Then, I was taken over to the orchestra. There, also, I was greeted warmly...given a chair to sit in...accepted as one of them immediately. It didn't matter that I was a novice who had just been handed a harp and could hardly play it. They let me know all I had to do was play my few notes. These people were incredible, accomplished musicians, and they wanted me, with my one or two miserable notes to play alongside? Incredible. But then, they were incredible. Not of this world; totally transformed by the continuous abiding of His Glory. I had the sense that at the right time the Son would take His position at the podium. He would raise his baton as conductor, to lead us in the song of the Bride and the Bridegroom. He would determine the timing, the score, the rhythm, in perfect accord with the Father. And everyone; those who'd been there long, as well as newcomers like myself, would be welcomed to join in. I was so touched by the sense of being a small, but significant part of the body. Imperfect, but important; unique, but stripped of my need for individualism in order to define myself. It became so easy, in the vision, to sense what it is to truly become One body, One Bride, functioning in unity to please and love the Son, our groom.

Given by the Holy Spirit, and most imperfectly transposed.

I hope this might bless you... S.

I left out the name of the person who had the vision just for the sake of being graceful. It seemed addressed to a less critical group than some of the visitors to PBC's site and those who write to me. I don't want to cause her to suffer from the unexpected scrutiny of an audience she had not anticipated. However, you are welcome to write to me and I will forward anything you have to say after asking her if she wants to read it. Please remember what Paul wrote, "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person." (Col 4:6). Be favorably disposed, regardless of her outward condition and season your words with just the right amount of salt. Don't be bland and don't salt your words to your own taste. You might like a lot more salt than she does.

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