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DREAMS & VISIONS

STUDY GUIDE



DREAMS AND VISIONS

SCRIPTURE READING

Joel 2:28

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.

Acts 2:17

And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.

Proverbs 29:18

Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

Ecclesiastes 5:3

For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.

Ecclesiastes 5:7

For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities: but fear thou God.

THEME

Dreams and visions are often viewed as mystical and sometimes questionable. Although not all dreams and visions are from God, that fact does not affect the validity of God speaking through dreams and revealing Himself through visions. We must constantly keep ourselves accessible to God and allow Him to speak through the method of His choosing.

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Dreams and visions can be viewed and studied in two different ways. We will use both of these methods in this study.

1. We will begin by looking at dreams and visions in the literal sense of the words.
 2. We will also look at dreams and visions from a figurative perspective.
- B. There are many dreams and visions recorded in the Bible. These dreams and visions are not only recorded to give us information, but they serve also as a reminder that God speaks in various ways. (Hebrews 1:1-2)
1. Although God speaks through dreams and visions, He may also speak in other ways.
 2. Not all dreams and visions come from God; therefore, not all dreams and visions should be followed.
- C. We will look at the word definitions of dreams and visions and, hopefully, distinguish between the two.
1. There are three different Hebrew words that have been translated “dream” in the KJV of the Bible. These three words with their definitions are as follows:
 - a. *chalom* (khal-ome’) - a dream.
 - b. *chalam* (khaw-lam’) - a primitive root; probably to bind firmly; figuratively, to dream.
 - c. *chelem* (khay’-lem) - from a root corresponding to *chalam*; a dream.
 2. There are three different Greek words that have been translated “dream” in the KJV of the Bible. These three words with their definitions are as follows:
 - a. *enupniazomai* (en-ooop-nee-ad’-zom-ahee) - from *enupnion*; to dream.
 - b. *enupnion* (en-ooop’-nee-on) - something seen in sleep.
 - c. *onar* (on’-ar) - of uncertain derivative; a dream.
 3. *Webster’s Dictionary* defines “dream” as a sequence of sensations, images, thoughts, etc., passing through a sleeping person’s mind.

4. There are ten different Hebrew words that have been translated “vision” in the KJV of the Bible. These ten words and their definitions are as follows:
 - a. *chezev* (khay’-zev) - a sight.
 - b. *chazah* (khaw-zone’) - a sight (mentally).
 - c. *chazuwth* (khaw-zooth’) - a look; hence a striking appearance, revelation, or (by implication) compact.
 - d. *chizzayown* (khiz-zaw-yone’) - a revelation.
 - e. *machazeh* (makh-az-eh’) - a vision.
 - f. *mar’eh* (mar-eh’) - a view (the act of seeing); also appearance.
 - g. *mo’eh* (ro-eh’) - a seer.
 - h. *chazowth* (khaw-zooth’) - a revelation.
 - i. *mar’ah* (mar-aw’) - a vision; also (causative) a mirror.
 - j. *ra’ah* (raw-aw’) - a primitive root; to see, literally or figuratively.

5. There are three Greek words for “vision” in the KJV of the Bible. These three words with their definitions are as follows:
 - a. *optasia* (op-tas-ee’-ah) - visuality.
 - b. *horama* (hor’-am-ah) - something gazed at.
 - c. *horasis* (hor’-as-is) - the act of gazing (internally or externally).

6. *Webster’s Dictionary* defines “vision” as the act or power of seeing with the eye; that which is supposedly seen by other than the normal sight; a supernatural, prophetic, or imaginary appearance; something seen in a dream, ecstasy, trance, or the like; an apparition; mental image; especially an imaginative contemplation; the ability to perceive something not actually visible, as through mental acuteness or keen foresight.

- D. Basically, dreams communicate and visions reveal.
- E. Legitimate dreams and visions are much more common than people care to admit.
- F. Dreams, visions, trances, and revelations are closely related, yet distinctively different.
 1. Dreams seem to come from the thoughts and imaginations of a person.
 2. Visions are perceptions seen through the eyes of the spirit, in contrast to the physical eyes.
 3. A trance is a state resembling sleep in which consciousness may remain, although voluntary movement is lost.
 4. Revelation is the revealing or disclosing of something not previously known or realized.

II. BIBLE DREAMS

- A. The Bible records many dreams of various people from various walks of life.
- B. Abimelech, Jacob, Laban, Joseph, the butler, the baker, Pharaoh, the Midianite soldier, Solomon, Nebuchadnezzar, Joseph (Mary's husband), and Pilate's wife are among those listed in the Bible who had meaningful dreams.
- C. God uses dreams to warn, instruct, and tell of the future. In Gideon's situation, a dream was used to encourage.
- D. According to Numbers 12:6, God used dreams to speak to His prophets.
- E. Dreams have played a vital role in Bible history; dreams also have a vital role to play in the Church.

III. BIBLE VISIONS

- A. It appears that visions of the Old Testament were primarily given to the prophets. The following men were spoken to in visions: Abraham, Samuel, Nathan, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Jacob, and Iddo. All of these men except Jacob are identified as prophets.

- B. God uses visions to warn, to instruct, and to reveal future events.
- C. Visions are also used to give direction and purpose.

IV. DREAMS AND VISIONS

- A. According to Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17, old men will dream dreams and young men will see visions. What is the significance of this prophecy?
- B. Let's look at dream by definition and correlate it with old men dreaming dreams.
 - 1. We have already learned that a dream is a sequence of sensations, images, thoughts, etc., passing through a sleeping person's mind.
 - 2. We must also realize that dreams are not limited to the night, nor does one have to be reclined in bed to dream; many people daydream.
 - 3. Dreams are closely related to thoughts and imaginations; consequently, one who is lost in thought is, to some degree, dreaming.
 - 4. Old men seem to be more proficient in dreaming. It seems that some have the ability to become lost in imagination.
 - 5. Dreams are basically imaginations; visions are perceptions of invisible things.
 - 6. It appears that the old men are more proficient in imagining, and the young men are more proficient in seeing. (Naturally, men's eyes dim with age.)
- C. It is vital that we understand the validity and the invalidity of dreams and visions.
 - 1. Not all dreams and visions come from God. (Deuteronomy 13:1-5; Jeremiah 14:14; Jeremiah 23:25-32; Jeremiah 29:8)
 - 2. The God Who created the thoughts and imaginations of men can also use those thoughts and imaginations to speak to men.

- D. Proverbs 29:18 reveals another facet of visions.
1. Although the word “vision” of Proverbs 29:18 is the same Hebrew word as that of Daniel 8:1, the first reference seems to give a greater depth and broader scope of vision.
 - a. A better and probably more accurate rendering of Proverbs 29:18 is: “without mental insight or purpose, people are undisciplined.”
 - b. The New King James Version reads, “Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint.”
 2. The “vision” of Proverbs 29:18 sets a goal; attaining that goal requires discipline.
 - a. Too many people have too little insight; consequently, few are setting goals.
 - b. Vision gives reason to discipline; discipline without desire is inconceivable.
 3. Visions are given by God to keep us on the course of His choosing.
 - a. God never intended for anyone in the Body of Christ to be “just a wandering pilgrim.”
 - b. God established our purpose before we were born; we must catch the vision God has placed on the inside of us and fulfill our purpose.
 4. God uses dreams and visions to aid and assist us in fulfilling our purposes.
- E. It often takes dreams or visions to encourage one to do the right thing or to go in the right direction.
1. God used a dream to warn and instruct Abimelech. (Genesis 20:1-7)
 - a. God spoke to Abimelech in the dream: “Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man’s wife.”

- b. Abimelech spoke to God in the dream: “Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation? Said he not unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this.”
 - c. God instructed Abimelech in the dream: “Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.”
2. God spoke to Jacob and revealed Himself to Jacob through a dream. (Genesis 28:10-22)
- a. God also promised to bless Jacob and assured him that He would be with Jacob until He had fulfilled His promise.
 - b. Jacob did not communicate with God in the dream.
 - c. Jacob was awakened from his sleep in fear.
 - d. Jacob recognized God as One Who was to be revered and respected.
 - e. The dream had such an impact upon Jacob that he set up a pillar and made a vow to the Lord.
3. God put Jacob in remembrance and also gave him direction through a dream. (Genesis 31:10-13)
- a. God revealed the success and prosperity of Jacob as a divine intervention of God.
 - b. The angel of God spoke to Jacob and reminded him that He was the God of Bethel, where Jacob had made a vow as a result of his previous dream.
 - c. God told Jacob to return to his own homeland.
4. God warned Laban through a dream. (Genesis 31:24)
- a. God spoke to Laban in a dream.

- b. We have no record of Laban communicating with God in the dream.
5. God gave insight of the future to Joseph through dreams. (Genesis 37:5-11)
 - a. Joseph dreamed two dreams which revealed the same thing.
 - b. Joseph told the dreams to his father and brothers, who understood the interpretation, although they did not accept the dreams as divine.
6. The futures of the baker and butler were revealed to them through dreams. (Genesis 40)
 - a. Neither the butler nor the baker was able to interpret his dream, so God provided them with an interpreter.
 - b. Although the dreams of the butler and baker had certain similarities, the predicted futures were opposite for the two.
 - c. These dreams were different in that they gave one hope and the other no hope; therefore, we can conclude that not all dreams are necessarily pleasant in content.
 - d. The dreams of both the butler and the baker came to them in parable form and required an interpreter.
7. Pharaoh's dreams were instrumental in both preparation and exaltation. (Genesis 41:1-37)
 - a. God showed Pharaoh the future and provided a counselor to advise Pharaoh concerning the future.
 - b. Joseph's interpretation of the dreams and his counsel to Pharaoh caused Joseph's dreams to be fulfilled.
 - c. Pharaoh's dreams came in parable form, and they required an interpreter.
8. God encouraged Gideon through another man's dream. (Judges 7:9-15)

- a. Although this dream encouraged Gideon, it foretold the coming defeat of the armies of the man who had dreamed the dream.
 - b. This dream put faith into the heart of one and fear into the heart of the other.
 - c. This dream was also in parable form and required an interpreter.
 - d. Neither the dreamer nor the interpreter was in covenant with God.
9. God imparted wisdom into Solomon through a dream. (I Kings 3:5-15)
- a. God and Solomon conversed back and forth in this dream.
 - b. Both wisdom and blessing were given unto Solomon as a result of his dream.
 - c. God also gave Solomon a promise which was contingent upon Solomon's obedience to the Word.
10. God revealed to Nebuchadnezzar, through a dream, future events that would affect the world. (Daniel 2:1-19,26-45)
- a. Nebuchadnezzar's dream was unique in that he could not remember his dream, even though it troubled him greatly.
 - b. The dream and its interpretation told what was and what was to come.
 - c. This dream revealed the day in which you and I are living.
 - d. God gave Nebuchadnezzar insight into the Kingdom of God and the effect God's Kingdom would have on all other kingdoms.
 - e. This dream was given in the form of a parable, and it required an interpreter.

- f. This dream caused a heathen king to honor and extol God.
11. Through a dream, God revealed unto Nebuchadnezzar his own future and gave him the opportunity to repent. (Daniel 4:4-27)
 - a. This dream revealed the pride of man and the displeasure of God.
 - b. This dream was given for the purpose of getting Nebuchadnezzar on God's course, but he refused the warning and suffered the consequences for not changing his ways.
 - c. This dream also came in the form of a parable, and it required an interpreter.
 12. Like Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel too had a dream giving insight into the coming Kingdom of God. (Daniel 7)
 13. God warned and instructed Joseph, the husband of Jesus' mother, through dreams. (Matthew 1:20-21; Matthew 2:13-14; Matthew 2:19-20)
 - a. Through a dream, Joseph was instructed to marry Mary; Mary's virginity was also validated in this dream. (Matthew 1:20-21)
 - b. Jesus was named through this same dream.
 - c. Joseph was instructed to take his family into Egypt through a dream. (Matthew 2:13-14)
 - d. Joseph was instructed to leave Egypt and to return to Israel through a dream. (Matthew 2:19-21)
 - e. Joseph moved his family to Nazareth because of a dream. (Matthew 2:22-23)
 14. The wise men were warned of Herod's intent concerning Jesus through a dream. (Matthew 2:12)
 15. God warned Pilate, through his wife's dream, not to sit in judgment against Jesus, but he did not heed the warning. (Matthew 27:19)

16. The promise of innumerable seed was given unto Abraham through a vision. (Genesis 15:1-6)
17. God spoke unto Jacob in a night vision and instructed him to go into Egypt. He also assured Jacob that he would once again see Joseph. (Genesis 46:1-4)
18. Samuel's first encounter with God was through a vision. (I Samuel 3:1-18)
19. The prophecy concerning the establishment of David's house, which was given unto him by Nathan, came through a vision. (II Samuel 7:1-17; I Chronicles 17:1-15)
20. According to II Chronicles 9:29, Iddo the seer recorded his visions.
21. Isaiah recorded his prophetic vision. (Isaiah 1:1; Isaiah 21:2)
22. Ezekiel also saw prophetic visions and recorded them. (Ezekiel 1:1; Ezekiel 7:13; Ezekiel 8:3-4; Ezekiel 11:24; Ezekiel 12:27; Ezekiel 40:2; Ezekiel 43:3)
23. Nebuchadnezzar's dream was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. (Daniel 2:19)
24. Daniel also had prophetic visions, which he recorded. (Daniel 7; Daniel 8; Daniel 10)
25. Obadiah recorded his vision. (Obadiah)
26. Nahum recorded his vision. (Nahum 1:1)
27. Habakkuk was instructed to write his vision. (Habakkuk 2:2-3)
28. John the Baptist's birth was announced by a vision. (Luke 1:5-22)
29. Peter, James, and John saw Jesus transfigured and communing with Moses and Elijah as a result of a vision. (Matthew 17:1-9)
30. Certain women saw a vision of angels who told them that Jesus was alive. (Luke 24:22-24)

31. Cornelius sent for Peter as a result of a vision. (Acts 10:1-8)
 32. God spoke to Peter through a vision, which had great influence upon Peter's going to Cornelius' house. (Acts 10:9-20; Acts 11:4-5)
 33. It was a vision that turned the course of Paul's life. (Acts 9:1-18; Acts 26:19)
 - a. Paul first had a vision of Jesus.
 - b. Paul later had a vision of Ananias coming to him and laying hands upon him. (Acts 9:10-12)
 - (1) Ananias was instructed through a vision. (Acts 9:10-12)
 - (2) The vision gave Ananias power over fear.
 34. Paul received direction for ministry through a vision. (Acts 16:9-10)
 35. God encouraged Paul through a vision. (Acts 18:9-11)
 36. According to II Corinthians 12:1, Paul had several visions and revelations.
 37. Even Baalam had a vision concerning the nation of Israel. (Numbers 24:3-4)
 - a. The spirituality of a person must not be judged by the supernatural events that take place in his life.
 - b. God uses various methods and people to accomplish His will and purpose.
- F. According to Numbers 12:6, God reveals Himself to His prophets through visions, and He speaks to them through dreams.

V. BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF DREAMS AND VISIONS

- A. Understanding in visions and dreams is a gift from God; consequently, not everyone has the ability to interpret dreams and visions. (Genesis 40:8; Genesis 41:15-16; II Chronicles 26:5; Daniel 1:17)

- B. Never follow a dream or vision that violates the Scriptures.
- C. There are many supernatural things occurring in this day and age; consequently, we must follow John's instruction and try the spirits to see if they are of God. (I John 4:1)
- D. God-inspired dreams and visions will not violate the conscience of an individual. The conscience of man should be his spiritual guide.
- E. Dreams and visions may violate traditional and denominational teachings. Such was the case with Peter. (Acts 10:9-20; Acts 11:5)
 - 1. The Jews, by the Law of Moses, were not allowed to eat the animals which Peter had been commanded to eat in the vision.
 - 2. In reality, the vision was not related to food; it was related to people, Gentiles. God required Peter to defy tradition by going to the Gentiles and preaching the gospel of Jesus.
- F. God is establishing His kingdom. Dreams and visions will not interfere with that process; they will enhance the process.

VI. PRESENT DAY DREAMS AND VISIONS

- A. According to medical science, dreams are common, and they are considered to be normal rather than exceptional.
- B. God-inspired dreams are not to be confused with the normal activity of a sleeping person's thoughts and imaginations.
 - 1. God-inspired dreams are given for a specific purpose, and they sometimes require an interpreter. Such was the case with Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar. (Genesis 41:1-16; Daniel 2:1-6)
 - 2. Always judge the interpretation of a dream by the Word of God and by the Spirit of God within you. Ask yourself these questions: Does it violate the Scriptures? Does the Spirit within me bear witness to the interpretation?

- C. God, in this day and age, leads by His Spirit. God may choose to speak or reveal through dreams and visions, but we must realize that these are not the only two methods the Spirit of God uses. We must not fabricate some erroneous doctrine of dreams and visions!
- D. God uses various tools to carry out His plans; dreams and visions are only two of God's many tools.

VII. DREAMS AND VISIONS PRODUCE PLANS AND PURPOSES

- A. Another aspect of dreams and visions is that of imagining possibilities and setting goals.
- B. We are living in the last days; consequently, our old men should be imagining possibilities for the future.
 - 1. Possibilities come from the inside of a person, but they are fruitless until action is taken to bring them from the realm of possibility into the realm of reality.
 - 2. Our old men must see the possibility of God taking complete control of the Church; they must also see the possibility of the Body of Christ becoming one in thought and purpose so that the earth may be filled with the expression and character of God.
- C. Dreams reveal possibilities; visions set goals.
 - 1. The Body of Christ must realize that we serve an all-powerful God of possibility.
 - a. We serve an "I can" God; "I can't" is not one of God's phrases.
 - b. We must realize that, with God, all things are possible for those who believe. (Mark 9:23)
 - 2. Goals must be set, and we must strive to reach those goals.
 - a. Reaching or attaining goals requires diligence, effort, and good planning.
 - b. In the words of Paul the apostle, we must "press toward the mark;" otherwise, we will not reach the predetermined goals. (Philippians 3:14)

- D. According to Ecclesiastes 5:3, fulfilled dreams are the result of much work and sometimes painful effort.
1. Dreams do not just automatically come true; they must be actively pursued until they become reality.
 2. We are also warned in Ecclesiastes 5:7 that not every dream is feasible; therefore, not every dream can be brought into reality.
- E. Fulfilling dreams and reaching goals come as a result of putting the hand to the plow and never looking back. (The little train that “thought it could” did.)
1. Never set an impossible goal, but never judge the possibilities through reason; judge the possibilities of every dream by the spirit.
 2. Most of our dreams and visions seem impossible to the natural man, but we are taught to be led by the spirit man, not by the natural man.
- F. Basically, we are what we think we are, and we do what we think we can do, but God wants to take us to a higher realm and reveal to us who we **really** are and what we can **really** do.
1. Jesus, when ministering to the man at the pool of Bethesda, took the man’s attention off the circumstances and placed it upon the possibility of a higher power and authority. (John 5:1-9)
 2. Looking through natural eyes, we can miss the forest while looking at the trees; looking through God’s eyes reveals a forest made up of trees. God views everything from a higher plane and, also, from a more accurate perspective than man.
 - a. We must not walk with our eyes fixed upon the natural; we must fix our eyes upon God, Who reveals the supernatural.
 - b. We must start viewing things from God’s perspective; God focuses His attention upon what He desires, not what He sees. (Romans 4:17)

3. When we realize **Whose** we are, **who** we are takes on a different meaning.

VIII. VISIONS WITHIN A VISION

- A. Every local church ordained by God exists for a purpose.
 1. It is imperative that each church know the purpose for its existence.
 2. Every church is responsible for discipling men for Jesus, but the method of doing so may vary from church to church.
 3. We must not stereotype churches; not all churches are ordained to do the same thing the same way.
- B. The purpose for the existence of a church is actually the vision of the church. In this setting, purpose and vision are synonymous words.
- C. Each member of the local body exists for a purpose.
 1. It is imperative that each member realize his purpose for existence.
 2. Each member is a distinct part of the local body, set in that local body for a particular reason.
- D. Just as the physical body is one body made up of many members, so are the Body of Christ and the local assembly. (Romans 12:4-8; I Corinthians 12:12-31)
- E. Although each member of the body has a different function, it takes all the members of the body working together to accomplish certain tasks.
 1. The local assembly must also function in the same way the physical body functions; each member must cooperate one with another, doing what that particular member is ordained to do and allowing the other members the privilege of doing what they are ordained to do.
 2. The hands and feet have different functions, but it takes both cooperating with one another to get certain tasks accomplished.

- F. Jesus is the Head of the local church; Jesus sets overseers over the local churches, and He imparts into each bishop the vision for his particular church.
 - 1. The overseer must convey the vision of the church to the church.
 - 2. Each member of the local assembly must align his vision to the main vision of that particular assembly.
 - 3. Not everyone is called to the same local church.
 - 4. If the vision of the local church that you presently attend does not fit your vision, then allow the Spirit of God to lead you to the church that can incorporate your vision.
 - 5. Do not try to change the vision of the God-ordained oversight!

IX. SUMMARY

- A. Dreams and visions are two methods God uses to speak and reveal.
- B. God-inspired dreams and visions have significant meaning, and they should be followed.
- C. Without a vision, people flounder and become unproductive.
- D. The purpose of dreams and visions is to keep or place people on the course of God's choosing.
- E. God-inspired dreams and visions will always lead one to God, not from God.
- F. God-inspired dreams and visions will agree with the Word of God, and they will also agree with the Spirit of God within an individual.
- G. God leads by His Spirit. The Spirit of God leads in various ways; dreams and visions are only two of the ways God uses to lead and direct us.
- H. Dreams and visions produce plans and purposes.

- I. It is imperative that the dreams and visions of individuals be incorporated with and aligned to the main vision of the local church.

X. CONCLUSION

- A. We are living in the last days, which were spoken of by the prophet Joel.
- B. Dreams and visions are occurring, and they will continue to occur in these last days, but we must be certain of their origin; not all dreams and visions are from God.
- C. If you do not have a vision and if you are not aware of your purpose, seek the God of vision and purpose; do not seek vision and purpose.
- D. Dare to dream dreams and to set goals, and also dare to pursue them.