

Dreams, Visions and Seers

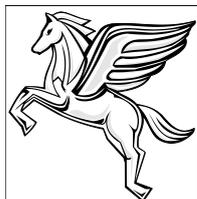


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DREAMING



The Bible clearly shows that the Lord communicates to people through dreams, visions and even trances. For example if you remove the dream sequences from the beginning of Matthew's Gospel you greatly impoverish its supernatural impact. There are seven references to "dreams" in the New Testament, and five are found in the first two chapters of Matthew.

By and large modern Biblical students in the West regard the interest in dreams and visions as primitive and as unhealthily subjective. Where the Church has ignored this gift, the enemy has stepped in and provided the world with a counterfeit view of interpretation. The unsaved have eagerly lapped it up through psychology (Freud, Jung, etc) and the New Age movement.

Fifteen or twenty years ago we may have had to work hard at convincing Christians of the God-given reality of dreams for our modern era. But today it's more or less a waste of time to attempt to persuade people to believe in dreams. Why? Because many Christians are regularly experiencing dreams and visions today, and they need no convincing of their divine origin.

What we do need is good Biblical criteria for discerning which dreams are from God, and which originate either from our own soul life or demons. Coupled with this we require a reasonably good understanding of Biblical typology and symbolism, in order to correctly interpret these dreams. So **discernment** and **interpretation** of dreams seem to be the key need for now.

This manual cannot possibly provide all of this, but I have attempted to help with the process of laying a good foundation for learning about dreams and how to interpret them. My own conversion was through a dream, so I am convinced of their reality and importance. However my greatest concern with those who refer a lot to their dream-life and use dreams for guidance, is in the area of too much subjectivity. There is a real danger of falling into deceit if you become too enamoured by your dream-life supposing that nearly all of your dreams come from God.

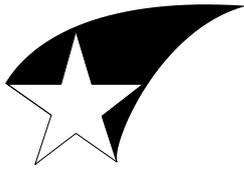
Nevertheless the Word of God convinces me that such experiences will gather momentum as the End of the Age draws closer. The path we need to tread is one between objectivity and subjectivity of our dream experiences. *Too much* attention to dreams may delude us, and lead us into pride and spiritual elitism. *Too less* attention to them may cause us to grieve the Holy Spirit as He visits us with the language of symbols.

I hope and pray that this manual, and books by others on this wonderful subject, might enlighten our eyes and give understanding to our hearts.

“Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding,
If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures;
Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God.
For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding”

Proverbs 2: 3-6

MY CONVERSION DREAM



In early 1967 I experienced the following dream. It was in black and white and lasted for about 30 seconds. There was no voice, movement, or sound in the dream at all, but its effect on me was nothing more than life-changing. It came about 6.00am one weekday.

The figure on page 5 shows the dream. A circle, on the left hand side, of a stylised mountain, viewed from side on, with a five-pointed star surrounded it. Although the star was not moving in the dream, I instinctively knew it was “rising” and that it didn’t have long before it would reach its zenith.

If someone were looking from the right-hand side of the mountain they wouldn’t see the star. But since I was “seeing” it from a different perspective (side on) I understood that although still hidden from view, the star was rising and once at the summit would be manifest.

I knew from the position of the star that it would not be too long before it, and its accompanying power, would be fully revealed. There was a sense of dread about this.

From my side-on vantage I could also “see” the word R-E-P-E-N-T spelt out high in the sky, on the right hand side. This word couldn’t actually be seen, but I knew it was there. It was large, emblazoned in the sky like a banner - but absolutely invisible. It was clearly a warning sign and a call to respond to its message.

Yet because it was invisible I took it to mean that only those who have “eyes to see” can appreciate what’s going on in the eternal realms. I don’t mean this in any sense of elitism at all, but for myself this means God was giving me the opportunity to respond to His season of grace and escape the awfulness of this evil power that is coming upon the earth.

My initial response to this dream calling for repentance (which literally means “*to change one’s mind and heart*”) caused me to start attending Church.

Right from the beginning I understood that the encircled five-pointed star represented evil. Later I discovered it was a common satanic emblem.

In the years that followed the interpretation of the dream deepened to mean the following:

The encircled five-pointed star is a sign of the anti-Christ power that has been rising from the earliest of ages. The mountain is hiding the gradual rise of this power. When the star reaches the summit of the mountain, the evil will be made manifest to everyone - but it will be too late.

In the dream I was given the opportunity to see this side-on, giving me an insight into the overall scenario. The Lord was calling me to repent before the evil became fully revealed.

A sort of “frame”, much like a window frame, enclosed the whole imagery of the dream. I took this to mean that I was given insight through a spiritual “window” and

allowed to see what was going to happen “soon”. The dream had a sense of urgency about it.

Since then one of my most consistent teaching themes has been the End Times. This fits the principle that when your Calling is given, so your Destiny is linked to the events of that Call.

I have used this personal example of a dream to show the impact of such God-given experiences and their life-changing power. At the time no one was witnessing to me; I was not religious at all, and there was no outside Christian or religious influence whatsoever; neither were any members of my family Christian. For me this makes the dream even more remarkable, as it seemed to come from out of nowhere and dramatically intervene in my teenage years.

My early Christian life was propelled by this dream, and my conversion dates right from that experience. It’s mainly because my conversion came through a dream that I’ve always been interested in dream-states and visions as recorded in the Word, and people’s experiences of them today. I believe that “Repentance” is clearly an End Time call to the Church and the world. It’s obviously also a consistent message of the entire New Testament.

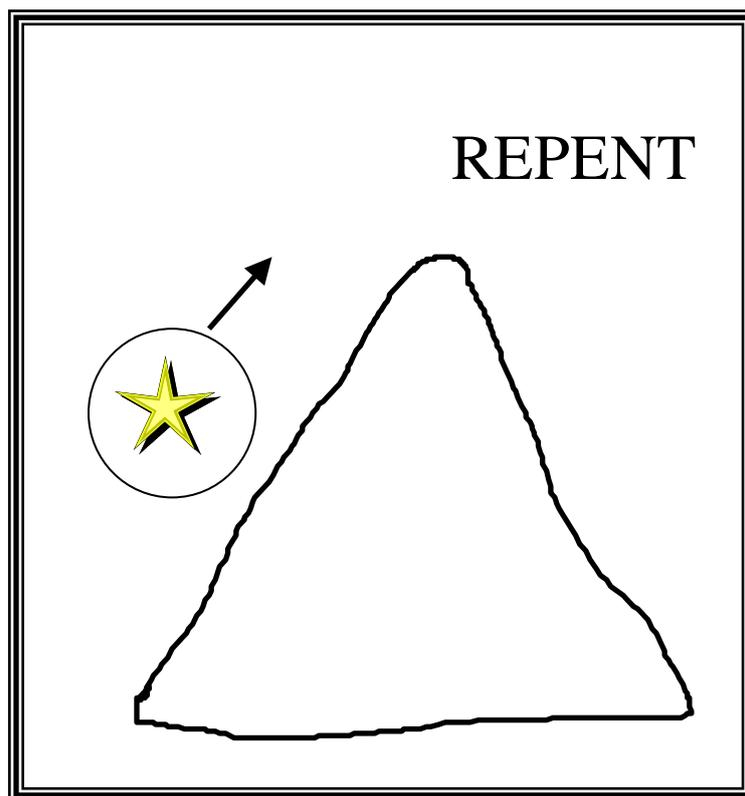


Figure 1



PHYSIOLOGY OF THE DREAM STATE

In most Christian books on dreams there's a glaring omission on *how* and *when* dreams occur. It seems that we have become so entranced by the fact that dreams can be a communication from God that we've overlooked the natural biological stages of sleep that dreams work through.

Without trying to take anything away from the supernatural side of dreams and their importance, I believe it will help if we understand the natural process of the sleep state. In becoming aware of this biological process we may discover a way of discerning which dreams are part of the expression of our soul-life, and which might be God-given.

To do this it is necessary to look at what has been learnt from sleep laboratory research. During sleep the rhythm of our brain fluctuates; these are called "brain waves". When a person falls asleep their brain waves follow a set pattern of changes. These are usually referred to simply as Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4. These waves are measured by a device called an electroencephalogram (EEG for short).

When we're awake the EEG pattern of our brain wave is active every 8 to 12 cycles per second. This is called the Alpha state. As we fall asleep we enter Stage 1, which is regarded as "light sleep". When this stage is entered our brain waves slow to about 4 to 5 cycles per second, the so-called Theta wave.

After a short period of a few minutes (and in the case of extreme tiredness, a few seconds), we enter Stage 2 of the sleep cycle. Our breathing slows and we relax more and more. Soon after this we enter Stages 3 and 4. The brain waves in Stage 4 are called Delta waves and the cycle is down to about 0.5 to 2.5 cycles per second. In other words there is hardly any mental activity in the brain at all at this level.

The Delta waves at this stage form the major part of the sleep and brain wave pattern. This is "deep sleep". This is entered usually about one to two hours after falling asleep.

These "stages" are not always distinct, but they do show the overall pattern of sleep. In fact the process of sleeping and dreaming is a continuous process that happens approximately four to five times a night in the average adult. God has given us a built-in cyclic pattern like the seasons.

Once the first deep-sleep stage has passed at the beginning of a night's sleep, we "re-surface" so to speak to Stage 1 again. It's in this state that we dream. From then on we go through the cycle again from Stage 1 down to Stage 4, then back to Stage 1 and down to Stage 4 or climb to Stage 3. As this pattern continues we gradually go from Stage 1 (dreaming) and enter the higher levels of Stage 3 (*See chart on page 8*). This cycle will happen 4 to 5 times a night.

As we enter different levels of sleep there are physical symptoms that accompany each stage. One of the most common is the activity of our eyes. This is called either Non-Rapid Eye Movement (NREM) or Rapid Eye Movement (REM). During Stage 1 after the first cycle has happened there is considerable REM. This indicates a

dreaming state. Watch your cat or dog next time they dream, and you will notice how they twitch their face and eyes.

In the laboratory when subjects have been woken up during Stages 2 to 4 they hardly ever report a dream. But when woken up during REM in Stage 1 the subjects nearly always say they've just been dreaming. This means we dream most often during Stage 2 (after having first entered the sleep cycle: *see chart next page*), and do not dream in the other stages.

This dreaming state takes up about 20% of our total sleep time. This of course doesn't mean God is confined to giving us a dream at these set times, but since He's the Creator it's obvious that the cycle of sleep pattern is His creative work, and He is most likely to use it.

This makes sense to me regarding my own Conversion Dream. When I awoke from sleep that morning after having the dream I knew I had just had it. It wasn't something that I dreamt earlier in the night, say at 1.00am. I realised I had just had the dream. I recall waking up, sitting on the side of my bed and thinking about it. I then got up, dressed, and went off to work.

In the following chart you can see that the final dream cycle occurs on an "up", that is Stage 1, from which we then awaken and go about our daily business. This is exactly what happened to me. God gave me my dream minutes before waking. He also chose to give it to me during the last cycle of the sleep pattern - presumably so I wouldn't forget it easily! But it also impacted me very strongly because I'd just experienced it.

Is there a clue in this for us? When God gives us a dream is He likely to give an important communication to us earlier on in the night if we're likely to forget it? After all if God wants to get through to us He'll also make sure we remember what He imparted.

Isn't it more probable that God would give us important dreams closer to our waking time? And if He chose to give us a dream earlier on, then He'd make sure we could recall it either by bringing it back to mind on awakening, or waking us up during the night just after having the dream.

It also seems from research that the first couple of dream states are the shortest, and the longest dreams occur at the end of the sleep pattern, that is, just prior to waking up.

It would be interesting to know when the majority of Biblical dreams occurred. For example did Jacob have his dream of the ladder in the final stages of his sleep pattern? In Genesis chapter 28 verse 18 it says that Jacob arose "early" in the morning having just recalled his dream. The Hebrew words for the phrase "*early in the morning*" is **shakam** (H7925) **boqer** (H1242) interpreted as "*dawn, at the break of day*". So the most probable meaning is that the dream came at the end of his sleep cycle.

Why is this important? Because we may find a pattern that God-given dreams come later during sleep rather than earlier. If this is so then it could help us to discern between dreams that come from our emotions and those given by God Himself.

The former may erupt from within our soul life simply due to the events of the day. The latter may come after an all-night "purging" of our mind through soul-dreams,

thus releasing any God-given dreams to come forth. In this way Divine Dreams are likely to be less tainted by issues of the soul and events of the past day.

PATTERN OF A TYPICAL NIGHT'S SLEEP

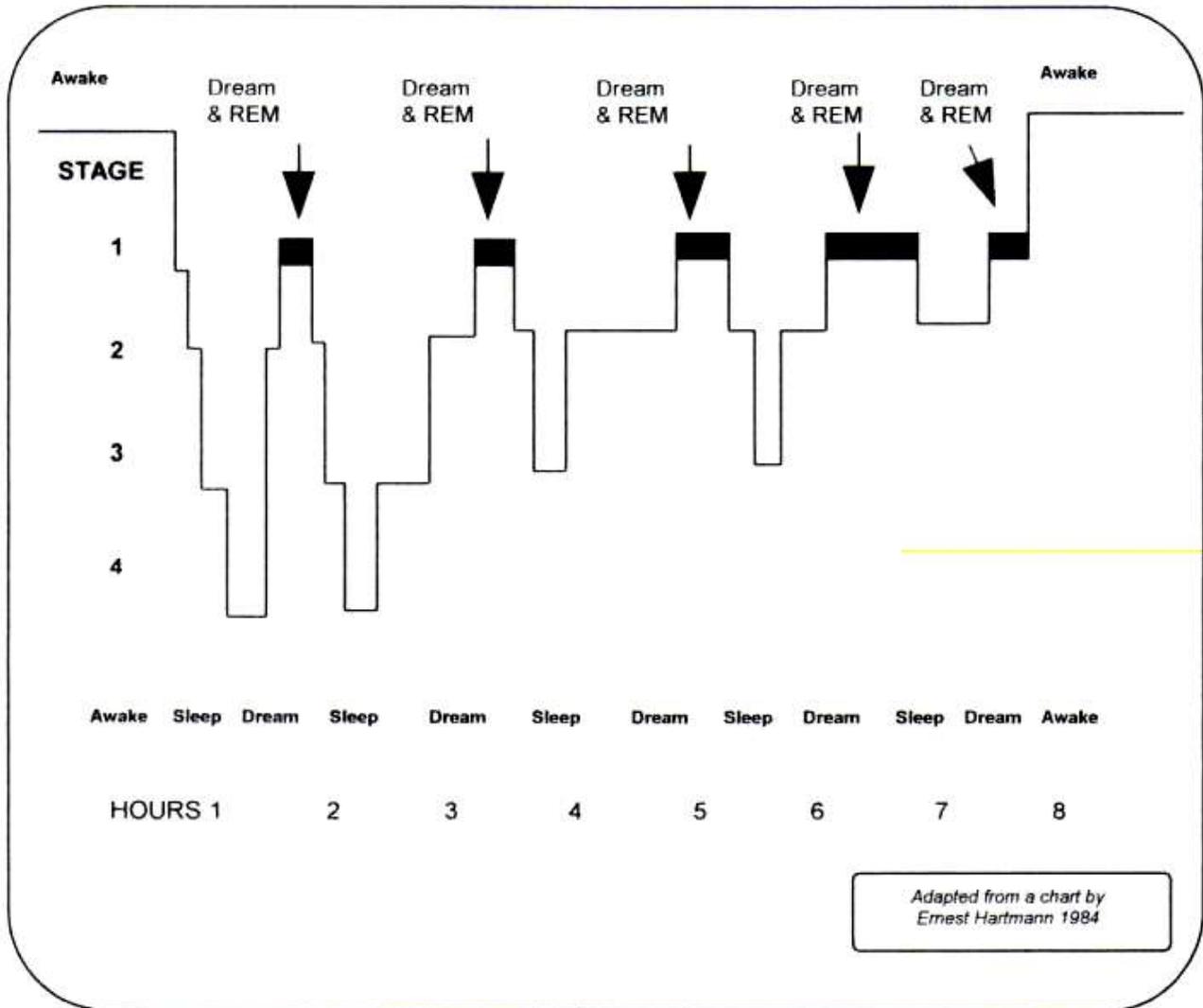


Figure 2



SYMBOLISM IN DREAMS

First of all, don't buy or use a book that purports to explain dream symbolism. They're nearly all based on either Freudian or Jungian psychology, and as such are fraught with error.

Both Freud (the so-called "Father of Psychology") and his contemporary Carl Jung were both troubled by inner torments and by their own admission, directed by "outside forces" that Jung called *Spirit Guides*. In other words, demons! I include this here as a warning, because some Christians have wandered into psychology and used concepts and practices that are based on false teaching.

This brings us to a consideration of dream symbolism. I have found that usually when God communicates to us through dreams and visions He often shows us a symbol that is both "ancient" or found in the Bible.

By "ancient" I mean something that isn't normally found in our modern day. For example, it's remarkable how often 21st century people will dream of knights on horseback, or ancient warriors setting out on a journey of discovery. It seems that there's an underlying group of symbols from the ancient past that evoke certain emotional responses in us.

When we look at the Bible (even though it's historically an "ancient" book) we find symbols that readily still speak to us today. This isn't just due to the fact that we've read the Bible and its imagery has "sunk in", because even people who aren't Christians or regular Bible readers, will often have the same images in their dreams. For this reason I find that the best reference for decoding symbols is the Bible.

In order to correctly understand Biblical dream symbolism you will need to dig out the treasures of typology. This is the explaining of symbolism and imagery that gives insight to certain Biblical truths and principles. There are a number of books on this subject (see Bibliography; page 76).

However the Lord isn't confined to using Biblical symbolism. We can have God-given dreams that have trains, racing cars and computers in them. Remember that the imagery in a dream is pointing to a particular truth or principle that the Lord wants to highlight for us. If He has to use an image of a mobile phone or digital camera to do this, then He will. An important point to remember is that it's not often the symbol itself that's important but the intent of the message and the response it's meant to evoke in us.

For this reason you could dream of a modern jet airplane and quite easily see that the plane itself is not the issue, but what it represents. In such a case it could mean to fly higher than other planes, which may be a truth God is attempting to get through about your own spiritual life. When such modern images come to pass in a dream or vision I usually find it will fairly easily identify with some Biblical imagery of the same nature.

In the case of a hi-tech modern jet plane, it could simply be a modern version of an eagle. Both fly higher than any other of its type, and both point to the desire (or need) to climb higher spiritually. It doesn't take much to link the modern symbol to a more ancient one, particularly one found in the Bible.

A car or train in a dream can also be a modern version of a horse, which stands for “power, spiritual support, or conquest”.

It's not the symbol that's important but the intent of the message it conveys.

I think one of the reasons we tend to “go back” to the more ancient symbols is that they say so much more than the modern. It's obvious that if you start to interpret what a modern jet plane means symbolically, you're going to run out of meanings pretty quick. However, if you transfer the image of the Eagle in place of the jet plane you're going to get a much richer insight to the meaning.

An eagle is living, the plane isn't. The eagle can breed, the airliner cannot. Eagles have a will of their own, a plane doesn't, etc.

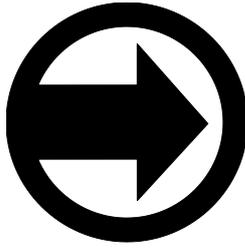
So when you believe you've received a God-given dream and it has modern images in it, simply try to find the **immediate meaning** to the overall dream. Then see if you can **replace or transfer** the modern image with a Biblical one that fits. You'll be surprised how easily it can be done.

Generally I would advise that you don't delve too deeply into dream interpretation. It's highly subjective, that is, it depends on **you** finding the meaning. And as the Word of God says the heart of man can trick you "**The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?**" (Jer 17:9)

If you do have a God-given dream that's highly symbolic, stick to the Biblical imagery and typology. It's a good safeguard and will save you from wandering into the likelihood of deceit. By and large most dreams with symbols in them can be readily worked out by a close reading of what the Bible says about those very symbols, or their modern counterparts.

I once sought the Lord about this in regard to my conversion dream. I felt He impressed upon me the parallel principle regarding tongues and interpretation. He showed me that when He gives a message in tongues He will always give the interpretation along with it, either to the speaker or someone else present. So with the dreams He gives. When He sends a dream to us He'll always give us the interpretation as well, just like speaking-in-tongues.

I found this very helpful. It can mean that the dreamer himself will have the interpretation for his own dream, or in some cases, someone else may be able to assist. Generally I don't counsel you to seek an interpretation from others about your dream. Go to the Lord yourself and ask Him. Asking others may leave you open to manipulation or suggestion. If the Lord gave **you** the dream, then He's most likely to give **you** the meaning as well.



RESPONDING TO A DREAM

Dreams bring revelation, but they're also meant to illicit a response on our part. Until we obey what the dream is saying we won't move on in God.

If our dreams require a response from us, we will not move to the next stage God has determined for us until we have obeyed. This is the same Biblical principle that we will not be given much until we have been faithful in the little: **“And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities’”**. (Luke 19:17)

When a dream keeps on repeating itself over a period of time, it means either we haven't interpreted the dream correctly, or we haven't obeyed what God is trying to impart. Further revelation is dependent on our present obedience.

Watchman Nee put it this way: *“Revelation is born out of previous revelation; it is never given in isolation.”*

I have wondered if this principle can be extended further. Is it possible that dreams and visions are sequential, that is, they are born out of previous dream experiences? Could it be that the revelation that comes with dreams and visions is compounded, building on what we'd received before? If this is true then it's vital that we respond to these experiences correctly in order to grow spiritually.

It's also important to realise that we cannot make a dream happen. Divine dreams and visions come at GOD'S TIMING; therefore they are important because they are given at the right moment for us. The Lord has selected a particular time to communicate to us through a dream, so we need to honour this timing and respond to it.

Dreams will often be given to us by the Lord in response to a heart-felt cry we have. For this reason each dream or vision will have a specific purpose. This of course refers only to “God-given dreams” not the ordinary type we all experience nightly.

Therefore if each dream has its own distinct purpose for us, it will have a corresponding impact upon us spiritually. This impact is not in the “reality” of the experience, that is, in its vividness, etc, but in the response our spirit gives to the dream. A truly spiritual dream will cause our spirit-man to respond.

A principle worth remembering is that *Revelation coming from Preaching or Teaching will usually move the hearer's soul, but a Dream or Vision will move the spirit.*

The Lord communicates with our spirit-man, not our soul. The latter acts as a kind of amplifier or filter of man's spirit. This is why it's important to have our soul-life under control.

If we receive revelation via a dream or vision and our character/soul/mind is not submitted to the Holy Spirit, we're likely to taint the message.

The same applies to the interpretation of a tongue, or the giving of a prophetic word. The soul must be mastered by our spirit under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Just as interpretation of a tongue must not be by the mind or intellect, so it's important that dream interpretation must not be rational or intellectual but spiritual (1 Cor. 2: 14)

In interpreting dreams and visions there may be times when we shouldn't just go by our own interpretation. We could make more of the symbolism than is intended. Also we're most likely to see it through the eyes of our own needs, desires and even doctrine! Sharing a dream or vision with a mature believer can bring quite a measure of balance.

If you do feel the need to share with someone I think the same protocol is necessary that applies to sharing a Word of Knowledge or Prophecy. The person we share with needs to recognise that we're sharing something very personal and that confidentiality is vital. There needs to be boundaries in place when opening up to others, not so much on our part but for those we share with.

However we need to be aware that sharing these experiences with others might not always benefit us. Some of the consequences of too readily opening up to others who do not understand spiritual things are:

- being misunderstood
- accusation of pride or elitism
- vulnerability to verbal attack

If after seeking for an interpretation and it still doesn't seem to come, don't fret or strain to get it. Linger with the Lord and let His Spirit bring revelation step by step. Also we shouldn't just seek for the interpretation alone, but the effect it's meant to have on our life as well.

In desiring to obey a dream or vision some people will attempt to decipher every symbol or meaning. Remember that not all things in a dream have the same importance. Dreams in particular, more so than visions, are like parables. In understanding a parable it's often the overall first impression that gives the heart of the message.

In the parables of Jesus there is often one, or at the most, two meanings. It was a teaching method used extensively by rabbis to use an everyday experience and relate it to some spiritual truth. These parables were not meant to be dissected to discover any hidden truths, but to act like a sudden revelation of one particular point being made.

So too with dreams. I've found that it's the first impression that gives the meaning. After realising this, you can then look deeper into specific symbols in the dream. These will confirm the impression you first sensed was right.

The recording or writing down of dreams will assist this process because in the very writing of it forgotten parts of the dream seem to be brought back to our memory. The act of committing the dream or vision to paper is also a way of honouring the importance of the experience.



DREAMS AS WARNINGS

In the Bible there are numerous examples of dreams used to bring a warning. We find one instance in Genesis where Abraham (for the second time!) pretends that Sarah is his sister (Gen 20: 2 / compare 12:11).

The unsuspecting King Abimelech takes Sarah to his harem but is warned in a dream not to touch her and to return her to Abraham. God in His mercy graciously warned this heathen king. One of the interesting things I find in this event is that God and Abimelech have a *conversation* with each other while the King is in a dream state! (See Gen 20: 3-7). We'll look at this ability later, particularly in regard to visions.

In the New Testament the most famous dream warnings are found in Matthew's gospel. The wise men are warned not to return to Herod (Matt 2:12). Interestingly enough this seems to be a season of dream-warnings because just after the wise men depart Joseph is also warned in a dream and told to flee to Egypt for a time. However in the latter case it's an angel that brings the warning, though still in a dream (Matt. 2:13).

There are many such examples of dreams giving life-saving warnings throughout history. It seems as though when a warning comes via a dream there is a time frame involved that gives us time to consider it. The dream may warn of something that's going to happen many hours before it occurs, an accident for example. The warning is giving us time to pray about it. The intercession can avert the disaster. Just because we have a dream that shows a friend drowning or in a plane crash doesn't mean the event is necessarily inevitable.

God will often alert us to a scheme of the Enemy so we can intercede to cause the accident not to happen. So don't just accept warnings fatalistically as if there's nothing you can do about it. God may be calling you to prayer!

However, warnings that come in the form of a vision seem to be much more urgent, warning of impending danger. Take this example for instance.

During World War II a lady in England was sitting in church one Sunday morning. Suddenly she had a vision of the building being destroyed in an explosion. She jumped to her feet and told the congregation. The pastor decided to clear the church immediately. A short while later a bomb fell and destroyed the building. ("Take another look at guidance". Mumford. Page 132)

I had a personal experience of such a dream-warning when our son was just a toddler. My wife and I were touring Kangaroo Island off the coast of South Australia, staying in a motel. One night I dreamt that Jeremy was standing close to the edge of a cliff and in danger. This kept me on the alert for most of the next day. But toward the end of the day I had relaxed my vigilance a little. It was at that stage that our son had wandered some distance from us playing near a drop that I had not realised

was there. At that moment the Lord brought back to mind the dream and I turned to see Jeremy standing very close to a considerable drop. Without panicking I quickly walked over to him, whisked him in my arms and carried him to safety.

No doubt many of you can relate similar and even more dramatic experiences. They are not at all uncommon. In these cases the dreams or visions warn of some physical danger.

However God also uses dreams to warn us of moral and spiritual consequences that are going to occur unless we take evasive action. This type of warning is found in King Amilech's dream in Genesis 20: 3-7.

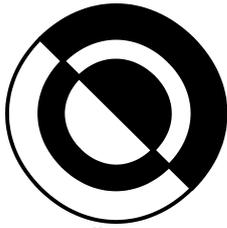
Since the dreams we are talking about have their origin in God, it's extremely important to take note of them. The Lord will often warn those in leadership of some danger looming in the Fellowship, even before the eldership have discerned there is a problem. This very week a lady in our Fellowship passed a note onto me of such a dream-warning, alerting me to a pastoral issue that she had no knowledge of at all in the natural.

The Church will be greatly impoverished if we ignore such warnings. In some cases it could mean allowing the Enemy to continue working within the local Fellowship to bring about division, or even the death of someone.

A word of caution here: if you ever have such a dream-warning that involves people you know in the local church or community, it wouldn't be wise to simply go and share it with them.

Use some wisdom, and approach the leadership first for counsel. Don't leave it too long, but do go and seek advice. It's not always the right thing to flash the warning lights so-to-speak as it may cause undue anxiety for the person involved. The dream may be for you to pray about; it's not always necessary or correct to share these warning-dreams with others. Use your discretion in the matter.





VISIONS COMPARED TO DREAMS

What is the Biblical difference between a vision and a dream? In the Hebrew language a **vision** has the meaning of *something mentally seen; an actual appearance; a form*. The Greek has a similar definition: *an apparition; something actually gazed upon; an external inspired appearance* (See page 66).

This means that visions usually take place in an awakened state, not when we're asleep.

It's like a direct illumination from God that breaks through and lets us see the spiritual realm around us. Of course we do not see everything of that realm, but only what the Lord chooses for us to see. It can be an appearance of Himself or an angel, or of some event happening around us that in the natural we can't perceive.

A **dream** on the other hand has subtle differences. The Hebrew defines them simply as a *dream of the night season*. In its verb form it's linked to the concept of *health and strength*. The Greek says a dream is *something that appears or is seen in sleep*.

Sometimes a dream is defined as a *vision in sleep*, making the distinction from a waking vision. In fact there are cases when people have been dreaming and then find themselves experiencing a vision within the dream itself! This explains the term *a vision in sleep*.

An important difference between a vision and a dream is that visions often, but not always, show us something that's actually happening around us at that precise moment, although we can't see it with our natural eyes. Dreams however seem to be generally for the "curing" of the soul, alerting us to things we've neglected but should rectify.

Visions give us a strategy to deal with the issue at hand. In the Bible angels were often used for this purpose acting as messengers or "bringers" of the vision.

Note this example when an angel is used by the Lord to actually bring forth a vision for the prophet to receive even further revelation (Zech. 5:5).

Then the angel who talked with me came out and said to me, "Lift your eyes now, and see what this is that goes forth".

Zechariah was already in a vision-state when *this vision within a vision* was given to him!



Other than a trance there seem to be two types of visions. One is the “open” vision. This is what is sometimes referred to as an “outer” vision, something actually seen like an angelic visitation. In this experience our eyes are opens and our emotions, thoughts and mind are all active. We might be going about our daily business, or at prayer, or meditating on the Word, when suddenly a seen flashes before us. It’s a sovereign work of the Lord and can catch you completely unawares. In some cases it can suspend the natural workings of the mind briefly, and even affect the body; you might be momentarily unaware of any pain or discomfort.

The other type of vision is the “inner” or closed type. These come more subtlety and can be accompanied by “flashes” of revelation. They seem to be more “within” us and seem to be mentally perceived. Sometimes, they’re referred to as “mental images”.

Many prophets describe them as appearing on the screen of the back of the forehead, on the inside. In fact I’ve noticed that when I’m active in the Holy Spirit and aware of His moving in a church meeting for example, that I’m particularly focused in on my forehead quite automatically.

Although this can sound a little like a New Age technique, there’s a parallel in the legitimate Christian experience of this. Many prophetic people say that they “see” a word or image at the back of their forehead.

The occult version of this is the third eye, which is believed to have super-sensory abilities. This is no doubt the satanic counterfeit to a God-given ability to receive a visionary experience.



One question that’s often asked is “**why** does God communicate like this?” Why doesn’t He just “speak” through the Bible?

I believe an important reason is because what we hear can be so easily forgotten. What we *see and hear* is often retained much better. It’s important to note that just as we have the natural senses, so we also have spiritual senses.

**Visions affirm
the reality
of the
spiritual
world
around us.**

These often act in tandem, so that you might be looking with your natural eyes but seeing something through your spiritual eyes. However, when you try to explain to someone what you’re seeing the person can be quite confused as to just what you’re seeing!

This is when people begin to distance themselves from you, and misunderstanding is likely to arise. It’s part of the pain you have to bear if the Lord has called you into this ministry. Visions also affirm to us the reality of the spiritual world around us. We actually see it in action. Dreams however are more likely to be subjective. And

we cannot always be sure whether last night’s dream came as the result of a bad day at the office or the pizza we had before going to bed!

Visions seem to break through and confront us. They are powerful and direct. You won’t find wasted words in a visionary experience. God speaks clearly and to the

point. During a vision all else around us seems to fade and we are focussed absolutely on the matter at hand. In this state time is held at bay. Coming out of a visionary state the physical body may feel weak or even in shock (Dan. 7:15).

**I Daniel, was grieved in my spirit within my body,
and the visions of my head, troubled me.**

People will often look drained after such an experience. The impact is so great that it confounds our mental processes and it takes time for the meaning of the experience to sink in. It can also bring with it a sense of dread, a renewed fear of the Lord, and puts things into their eternal perspective. A vision will challenge your spiritual laxity.



Dreams and visions aren't confined to believing Christians either. Cornelius wasn't a believer in Jesus when he experienced his vision (Acts 10:1-3).

And compare these accounts of Muslims experiencing dreams and visions in many places today:

A team belonging to the missionary athlete's movement *Athletes in Action* reports from their visit to the Central Asian republics of Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan: "One of the journey's most interesting experiences was to listen to a large number of people telling how they became Christians. Previously they had been atheists or Muslims. Some told us how God had spoken to them in dreams."⁶

Muslims often come to Jesus through dreams and visions. A new convert in Nigeria was being tortured by his tribe. Close to death in his hut he prayed aloud that God would forgive his torturers. He didn't know that they were present and heard his prayer. The following night the two mullahs had visions. One saw Jesus who showed him his secret sins. Both mullahs repented and went with their 80 followers to a church.⁷

These stories could be told again and again. Through dreams, visions and angelic visitation Muslim mullahs, Jewish rabbis, Buddhist monks and people of no faith at all, are being confronted by the God of heaven who is pouring out such experiences as the End of the Age draws nearer and nearer.

We shouldn't be surprised to hear of such things, for God has said, **"I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams"** (Acts 2: 17).



⁶ Source: Linda J. Brown, *Athletes in Action*; 1997.

⁷ Source: Australian PrayerLink newsletter, Year 5, No. 3 Aug. 1997

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