

Dreams and Visions
Genesis Ch 28 v 10-19 and Acts Ch 10 v 9-23

Is there a difference between Dreams and Visions? I think that it is generally agreed that, as I said last month, dreams occur when we are asleep whereas visions come to us when we are awake and alert.

In Genesis we read that God spoke to Jacob in a dream. When Jacob lay down to sleep at the place he later called Bethel he dreamt that he saw a stairway, full of angels, reaching from earth to heaven. God said that he would give Jacob's descendants the land where he was and that they would be 'as numerous as the specks of dust on the earth' and through Jacob God would bless all nations as they extended in all directions. God is passing on a message. That message has surely come true. It is worth noting the words of v 15: 'Remember, I will be with you and protect you wherever you go.' That message still stands!

Further on in Genesis, it is obvious that the life of Joseph, 'of Technicolour fame', is full of significant dreams. However, when Joseph voices the interpretation of his dreams it doesn't always put him in a good light, especially with his brothers! As the years unfold the dreams are seen to be true and are revealed as part of God's overall plan for his world. God's message to Jacob set him up for the remainder of his journey and Joseph trusted in God to guide him through life. Do we follow their example?

In the New Testament in Acts we find that God spoke to Peter through a vision when he was on a flat rooftop praying. Again God was passing on a message. He was teaching Peter that all are welcome in God's kingdom; Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor. God has created everyone equal and there was no room for clean or unclean as was part of the Jewish way of thinking. Pass on to others what you have learnt and through a life style of Christian living, hopefully others will see the difference it can make.

From the beginning of the Bible right through to the end, God's dreams and visions carry a similar format. The message holds teaching and instruction for the hearer, followed by the need for action. In the last book of the Bible that of Revelation, John has a vision of Christ – a dramatic and spectacular vision after which he is asked to write down what he has seen and pass it on to others in seven cities.

Does God still speak to individuals through dreams and visions today? We have no way of knowing but one thing is for sure he only connects with those who know him well, those who have a deep and personal relationship with God and who trust him through thick and thin. Those mentioned above and the many other prophets that God spoke to were all people God could rely on to carry out their task even if they were not confident at first. We have an advantage over the prophets of the past. We have the Bible as our reference book. The scriptures contain all we need to know about God, his work and his purposes and they give us many examples to follow. Any new information from any source - dreams or visions – must agree with the scriptures. These words from an old hymn come to mind:

Lord thy word abideth, And our footsteps guideth;
Who its truth believeth Light and joy receiveth.

For Discussion

1. Do we have that deep relationship with God that the prophets had?
2. Can we be trusted to pick up where they left off?