

Dreams and Visions

Joel Ch 2 v 28/29 and Acts Ch 2 v14 - 18

'Dreams and Visions' - 'Visions and Dreams' - What comes into your mind first when you hear these words? Do they mean the same? Do you think of good things to come or bad things that have happened? Are you like me and think immediately of a song or possibly a hymn?

Maybe you are transported to a wonderful theatre experience when you watched the musical Les Miserable and 'I dreamed a dream' still resonates in your ears. Perhaps the exciting, energetic stage show Joseph and his Technicolour Dreamcoat comes to mind when 'Any Dream Will Do' caught your imagination for months afterwards.

The words of Martin Luther King's famous speech 'I have a dream' must come high on the list of memorable events in American history. Answering the question 'Has his dream come true?' could constitute a Devotional Paper in itself and we won't go there today.

In both Old and New Testaments, there are many instances where dreams and visions are recounted. Throughout the Old Testament especially, it seems that it was the main way that God communicated with the prophets and leaders of the people. Remember, there was very little written text at that time because not many people could read, so most things were transferred by word of mouth. In the New Testament God still spoke to important figures to pass on instructions and guidance and to inform them of major events to come. We only have to think of Elizabeth, Mary, Joseph, Herod and the 3 intrepid travellers from the East that we read about in the Christmas story.

The book of Joel is one of the shortest books in the Old Testament and little is known about the prophet Joel himself. It probably comes from the 5th or 4th Century and part of the text relates a terrible invasion of locusts and a devastating drought sent by God as a punishment to those who apposed him. Joel then conveys the Lord's call to the people to repent after which God promises restoration and a blessing. God says, 'your old men will have dreams and your young men will see visions'. According to the internet dreams are 'flights of fancy' and 'drifts of the imagination', whereas visions are directives for work to be carried out and the necessity for action to be taken. Does this mean that **our** old men (and women) will have dreams and **our** young men (and women) will put their dreams into action and make them happen? If so God could be calling to us!

In Acts Ch 2 when Peter addresses the crowd at Pentecost, he refers to those same words from Joel. This brings the imagery forward some 500 years. Moving forward again: Does God today still speak today through dreams and visions? If so, is it our turn to put things into action?

Some of our Devotional Papers this year will focus on **our** dreams and visions for the future of our church and for this planet. God has asked us to be stewards of his wonderful world. Are we doing a good job? Could we do better? How can we all help? Is there something we can all do, however small? Maybe more questions than answers but I'm sure you agree that action must be taken.

The new theme is exciting and can take us in many different directions so let's get started!
For Discussion

1. Many of our hymns speak of visions. How many can you think of?
2. Can you always remember your dreams? Do they make sense to you?
3. How do you know if God is speaking through a dream or vision?