

CESSATION OF VISIONS AND DREAMS

I. DEFINITION

- a. Visions and dreams were vehicles through which God revealed His Holy Word.
- b. Some Bible verses to support this truth include:

Numbers 12:6-8, “And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?”

Hebrews 1:1-2, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds”.

- c. These biblical visions and dreams are not to be confused with our visions and dreams. Our use of the word “vision” means “to have foresight and plans and a goal for the future.” Our “dreams” are defined as “a series of pictures or events” in the mind of one who is sleeping. They are for private consumption, unlike the visions and dreams in the Bible that are recorded for our learning and study.
- d. What is recorded in the Bible as visions and dreams are in fact the very Word of God.

II. IMPLICATIONS

- a. Today, in some Charismatic circles, it is portrayed that a person who receives visions and dreams is one who is close to God, and who has been divinely endowed with a great privilege. Thus, he is honoured and placed on a pedestal.
- b. At times we, who are outside of the Charismatic circles, are confused and do not know how to react. Should we be intimidated? Dare we say categorically that these are false? And even if these are true, do they indicate anything special or spiritual about that person?
- c. What does the Bible teach concerning the recipient of such visions and dreams?
- d. An example for study and consideration – Genesis 20:1- 7, “And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar. And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife. But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, 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. And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her. 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.” [emphasis added]

- e. Abimelech was a Philistine king. He took Abraham’s wife in ignorance. If he had slept with Sarah, then God’s plan for the salvation of mankind would have been jeopardized.
- f. The dream Abimelech received from God was real. It was given to him by God to stop him from sinning. Abimelech’s dream from God is recorded for our learning and understanding.
- g. Was Abimelech born again since he received a real dream from God? Does it mean that he was a spiritual person? Does it mean that he had a special relationship with God? The answer to all these questions is an emphatic “no!” God did not reveal Himself to Abimelech again, and He would not. Abimelech could not call God “Jehovah” the way Abraham did. If Abimelech had been given a special relationship with God, then he would not have had to offer his offerings to God through Abraham. What Abraham received from him were not gifts for telling a lie. Abimelech’s offerings to God were given through the hands of God’s prophet, Abraham.
- h. There are many other examples in the Bible, such as the chief baker and butler (Gen 40), Pharaoh (Gen 41), Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 2), of those who received dreams and visions from God, but did not enjoy any special relationship with God. They were all unbelievers when God spoke to them through the dreams and visions. Even an ass (Num 22) can receive a revelation from God.
- i. We should not be intimidated by the claims of Charismatics today that they have received dreams and visions, as if they are more spiritual than those who do not. The measure of true spirituality is never by experiences. The true measure is by one’s obedience to God’s Holy Word.
- j. The Christian’s walk with God is always the measure of spirituality. The nature and the exercise of the believer’s gifts is not a measure. Neither is it measured by his wealth or how successful he is in the world.

III. PROOF TEXT EXPLAINED

- a. The proof text used by many Charismatics to support their claim of present day visions and dreams is Acts 2:16-21.
- b. Acts 2:16-21, “But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; 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: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

- c. Peter’s quotation is taken from Joel 2:28-32, “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: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.”
- d. When Peter quoted from Joel, he deliberately omitted the word “afterward” in Joel 2:28. This is significant. From Joel’s perspective, it was “afterward” because it was in the future. From Peter’s perspective it was the present, his present. What happened in Jerusalem at the time of the Pentecost was a fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy.
- e. Based upon Peter’s message, we see that Pentecost was already part of “the last days.” The fulfillment of these signs mentioned in Acts 2:17-18, when Israelites will receive visions and dreams, ushered in the period known as “the last days.” This was precisely what the apostles received from God when they wrote the New Testament. His prophesy was fulfilled in the lives of the apostles. The last days began with the First Coming of Christ (Heb 1:1-2).
- f. In biblical prophecy, there are no multiple fulfillments. There is only one fulfillment. To teach that there are multiple fulfillments in biblical prophecies is wrong, for we do not find it in the Bible. To teach that there are multiple fulfillments is to open a Pandora box that can never be closed. The Bible will become a book with no authority. Imagine various fulfillments of the virgin birth of Christ or the resurrection and death of Christ! All the biblical prophecies in the Bible have been fulfilled once and once only without repetition.
- g. The emphasis in prophecies is the certainty of the fulfillment of these prophetic events. This calls for faith. Therefore, in some cases there are long lapses between fulfillment of relevant verses. Daniel 2, for example, describes the kingdoms of Babylon (gold), Medes and Persians (silver), Greeks (bronze), Romans (iron), antichrist (clay and iron), and Millennium (stone not cut with the hands of man). The first four impact the First Coming of Christ and they occurred consecutively, one after the other. However, there is a gap of more than 2,000 years between the Roman Empire and the empire of the

antichrist which is to come. The Kingdom of Christ, the Millennium, will replace the antichrist empire.

- h. This gap is also found in Acts 2:17-20. Verses 17-18 describe the early period of the last days. The end of the last days is in verses 19-20. This interpretation is affirmed by the use of the singular “day” in the phrase, “before the great and notable day of the Lord come” (v 20b).
- i. The end of the period of the last days describes the Second Coming of Christ. This is confirmed in Matthew 24:29- 31, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” The similarity of the description of the last few moments before the last day, described in Acts 2:19-20 and Matthew 24:29- 30, is startling. The detailed description is revealed in the book of Revelation in the seven Trumpet Judgments and the Seven Vial Judgments.
- j. During this period of the last days, anyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ will definitely be saved. The entire local church scene is in the last days. We are living in the last of the last days. Many of the signs mentioned in the Bible preceding the Second Coming of our Lord have already been fulfilled. One of these signs is that of Matthew 24:24, “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” It says here that great signs and wonders will be done before the end comes. The alternate name of the Charismatic Movement, given by their leaders, is “The Sign and Wonders Movement”.
- k. There is, therefore, no basis for the Charismatics to claim that Acts 2:17-20 apply today and what they are experiencing is a continuation of Acts 2. The inaugural beginning of the “last days” period was the onceoff Pentecostal event which will never be repeated.

IV. VISIONS & DREAMS TODAY?

- a. Does God still use visions and dreams today to speak to someone?
- b. Dr John Sung, in his book, did testify to receiving visions and dreams in his personal life. The dreams revealed to him his life’s ministry. He said that in his vision, God told him that he would serve God within a period of 15 years, which is divided into five equal periods of three years each. All these came to pass in Dr John Sung’s life.
- c. There is no reason to believe that a man of God like John Sung would lie. What Dr Sung received was for him, and him alone. His vision was not added to the Bible as the Word of God.

- d. In this sense, the difference between a personal experience today and that of Bible times is very clear. The visions and dreams in the Bible were personal but they are recorded also for our learning and application. But not that of Dr Sung's.
- e. God can still choose to use visions and dreams to call one of His children to do a great work for Him, like Dr Sung. However, it is very rarely so. Even when these visions and dreams are true, they must be evaluated very carefully against God's Holy Word.
- f. They are for the person's own consumption and benefit and must be attested by the leaders of the church, using the Word of God. If a person's "calling" or claim based upon the dream is against the teaching in the Word of God, then that person would be called a false dreamer or prophet. The Bible text to support this action is Deuteronomy 13.

CONCLUSION

The warning from God's Holy Word is that there must be no addition to, and no subtraction from, God's Holy Word. Revelation 22:18-19 warn us, "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

Claims of visions and dreams are on the increase, particularly within the Charismatic Movement. They will not stop. With the restoration of the "prophetic and apostolic ministries" in the Charismatic churches, claims of visions and dreams will only increase. May God give to His people the discernment and courage to not only know what is right and truthful according to Scriptures, but also to speak wisely and for the glory of God to help some loved ones out of this global Charismatic deception. Amen.