

“Dreams”

Psalm 19:14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

1 Timothy 1:2 ...Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

Introduction

We spend about a third of our life asleep. It is only natural that people would speculate about what happens during that time. When we wake, we can sense impressions, feelings, distant memories of what was happening in our minds while we were asleep but the dreams usually remain somewhat elusive. We wonder, “What was happening in my own mind during that time?”

Even today, neurologists are unsure about how dreams are created. Scientists disagree as to whether or not there is one place in the brain where dreams originate. There are three or four competing theories on how the brain produces dreams.

If dreams are mysterious to us today, imagine how mysterious they must have seemed thousands of years ago. No wonder they have inspired artists, poets, musicians and mystics throughout history.

Today, I would like to look at Jacob’s dream, especially the vision of angels he had.

Abraham and Abimelech

Most people know that God used dreams in the Old Testament to communicate to people. This seems to be most common in the earliest periods of the Old Testament such as the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

One example is that of Abraham and Sarah. (Genesis 20:1 ff.) As they traveled through the Middle East, they met a king name Abimelech and he was smitten by Sarah's beauty. Abraham was afraid that the king would kill him to have her so he said she was his sister. (She was his half-sister.) King Abimelech took Sarah to be his concubine but did not touch her. Before he even came near her, God came to him in a dream and warned him that if he touched her, he would be as good as dead.

When Abimelech awoke, he asked Abraham why he didn't tell him the whole truth. He returned Sarah to Abraham and gave him gifts of silver and livestock. Then Abraham prayed that God would heal Abimelech's household so that they would be able to bear children. (God had closed their wombs as a punishment for what the King was planning to do with Sarah.)

Jacob and his Dream

Many years later, Abraham's grandson would have the dream that we read about today. He would dream about a ladder on the earth stretching toward heaven. Angels ascend and descend this ladder demonstrating a connection between God and humanity.

Once it is established that this message is from God, God promises Jacob many descendents and possession of the land on which he is sleeping. Jacob wakes and says, "How awesome is this place!" He then anoints a stone to mark the place where God made his presence known in a special way.

Dreams Today

As Christians, we accept the miracles in the Bible such as the resurrection of Christ and Moses parting the Red Sea. So for us it is easy to believe that God communicated to people in Biblical times through dreams. The more controversial question is, "Does God

continue to speak through dreams? Does he still guide his people in this way?"

There is a great deal of interest in dreams today, especially as they relate to Christianity. As I was writing this sermon, I looked at a few web sites about this topic. There are some people who claim to be Christians who say we are missing out on a great gift from God if we do not attempt to interpret dreams. I found some of these sites to be a little disturbing because they focus so much on dreams that they seem to lose track of what Scripture says. Some of them seemed more interested in following their own dreams than following what we have in God's word. In fact, they bordered on falling into witchcraft.

Warnings from Scripture

Scripture warns us that not everyone who claims to be an interpreter of dreams should be followed. Even at the time of Moses there was a problem with people using dreams to lead God's people astray.

Deuteronomy 13:1-3 says:

NIV Deuteronomy 13:1 If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, 2 and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," 3 you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul.

And in the time of Jeremiah, people were warned again.

NIV Jeremiah 23:25 "I have heard what the prophets say who prophesy lies in my name. They say, 'I had a dream! I had a dream!'

Promises in Scripture

On the other hand, Scripture does promise that in the last days God will work through dreams. We have a beautiful promise of what will happen shortly before the return of Christ in Acts 2:17-21.

NIV Acts 2:17 "'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. 18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 20 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. 21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

I look forward to the time when those words will come true. At the same time, we are not told exactly when those last days will be. When they do come, the prophets will not say anything that contradicts what God has said through the prophets of Scripture. God does not contradict himself.

Conclusion

Until we see the signs that accompany those dreams, it is better to rely on God's word than to worry about dream interpretation. I can't say that God never works through dreams today but we need to be very cautious about those who make these claims. Whatever they say, it needs to be consistent with the Bible.

In the meantime, we should take comfort in the promises that God made to Jacob and to all the other saints. Those promises are our promises too. We will receive the blessings of Jacob and more through faith in Christ.

Now may that peace which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and mind in Christ Jesus. Amen.