

International Conversation Café

Bible Topic: Dreams and Visions

Stories of people having significant dreams are in the Bible. Sometimes the dreams were mysterious, with only certain individuals having the ability to interpret them. Sometimes dreams were very clear, either as a warning or instruction.

Here are three examples of people that received a message from God through a dream.

1. Joseph, B.C. 1915-1805, was one of Jacob's twelve sons who was given the ability to interpret dreams. By interpreting a dream that the king of Egypt had, Joseph was able to prevent people from starving to death during a famine.
2. Daniel, who lived much later, interpreted the dreams and signs that God gave to several kings who ruled over Babylon during Israel's exile there. He also had his own dreams that indicated what future nations would rule over the area. His dreams were full of imagery that make it difficult for the modern reader to understand.
3. In a much earlier era, another man, Elihu, explained to Job that God uses dreams to warn those who are sinning to turn away from evildoing, Job 33:15

Do you think that God still uses dreams to communicate with people today?

Do you think that all dreams are from God?

Have you ever had a time where you thought perhaps God was trying to tell you something through a dream?

There were four dreams involved with the birth of Jesus Christ. The first one came to Joseph who was engaged to Mary. He was about to divorce her thinking she had been unfaithful to him. However, an angel appeared to him in a dream and said,

Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary home as your wife. The baby inside her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She is going to have a son. You must give him the name Jesus. That's because he will save his people from their sins. Matthew 1:20-21.

The next dream came to the wise men from the east who brought gifts to the infant Jesus. The angel in that dream told them not to go back and talk to Herod. Herod looked at Jesus as a political threat and wanted to kill him.

The third and fourth dream came to Joseph. In the third dream, an angel told Joseph to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt to escape Herod's plan to kill Jesus. In the fourth dream, an angel told him it was safe to return to Israel because Herod was no longer living.

¹⁹ After Herod died, Joseph had a dream while he was still in Egypt. In the dream, an angel of the Lord appeared to him. ²⁰ The angel said, "Get up! Take the child and his mother. Go to the land of Israel. The people who were trying to kill the child are dead."

²¹ So Joseph got up. He took the child and his mother, Mary, back to the land of Israel. ²² But then he heard that Archelaus was king of Judea. Archelaus was ruling in

place of his father Herod. This made Joseph afraid to go there. Joseph had been warned in a dream. So he went back to the land of Galilee instead. ²³ There he lived in a town called Nazareth. So what the prophets had said about Jesus came true. They had said that he would be called a Nazarene.

God gave four dreams to protect the Christ Child, Jesus. What do you think is the significance of this?

Visions are different from dreams in that they tend to happen when someone is awake. There are also many times in the Bible where someone reports having a vision. One famous vision is when the prophet Isaiah saw God sitting on His throne in heaven.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above Him were seraphim (angels), each with six wings: with two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory." At the sound of their voices, the doorposts and thresholds shook, and the temple was filled with smoke. ~Isaiah 6:1-4

*How would respond if you saw God in a vision?
Are there any stories of visions that you are familiar with?*

Maybe one of the most famous visions in the Bible is the book of Revelation. The entire letter that John wrote in around 95 A.D. is a series of visions that are about a future and end time when God will judge the world and establish justice. John gives a very descriptive account of what a new earth will be like.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. ~Revelation 21:3-4

*Restate this verse in your own words.
In the illuminated manuscript on the right, the Bible illustrators drew how they imagined John's vision. How would you illustrate John's vision?*

Though sometimes God spoke and speaks to people in dreams or visions more often he speaks to people through his words, such as in the Bible.

*Would you like to have a dream or vision?
How do you feel about reading or understanding God's words to you through the Bible?*



Cloisters Apocalypse MS 68.174 John Led to the New Jerusalem. 1330, Normandy, France