

## Dreams and Visions – How to Know if a Dream or Vision is From God

*“It will come about...that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. “Even on the male and female servants, I will pour out My Spirit in those days.” Joel 2:28-29 (NASV)*

How can one discern if a dream or vision is a special communication from God or not? Social media sites, alt news sites, and many internet-based ministries claim that they speak for God for they received visions or dreams from God. Is this possible? Some teach that God has only (and will only) speak through the prophets in the Bible, or believe that if God were to speak today, He would speak through professional clergy—likely through prominent pastors leading large churches. However, that supposition does not correlate well with Joel’s prophecy that in the last days, God would give dreams and visions to the unlikely—to those outside the ranks of professional clergy—to the young and old, to men and women, and to the rich and poor. If it is a given that in the last days God will give (to the unlikely) dreams and visions designed to warn, guide and encourage, then the question is: *How do the wise determine whether or not a particular vision or dream is from God?*

### Helpful thoughts and guidelines to determine whether or not a vision or dream is from God

#### Key Truths:

- God has and will reveal insights through dreams and visions. Noted below is the Bible promise: *“...I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. <sup>29</sup> Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days...” (Joel 2:28b-32)*
- The Bible notes that the giving of spiritual dreams and visions will be particularly prominent in the Last Days. The Last Days is the period between Pentecost and the end of the Tribulation Period. The Last Days also includes a short time referred to as The Birth Pangs by Jesus in Matthew 24 (vv. 4-14). The time of the Birth Pangs is the period immediately preceding the commencement of the Tribulation Period. It is likely God will give many dreams and visions during this time.
- Some suggest the Joel 2 prophecy noted above was fulfilled 2000 years ago when the disciples received the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:1-18, but this is not the case. Acts 2 records the BEGINNING of the fulfillment of the Joel 2 prophecy. Dreams and visions will likely become more frequent and more prominent as we move closer to the commencement of the Tribulation Period.

## **Key Warnings:**

- False Christs will appear (Matthew 24:24).
- False prophets will arise (Matthew 7:15-20).
- Satan can present or conjure visions (Matthew 4:8).
- Satan ‘masquerades as an angel of light’ seeking to deceive (2 Cor. 11:14).
- Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44).
- Satan will deceive many (Revelation 13:14, 20:8).
- Believers should be mindful of the character of Satan and be especially wary and careful to discern if a dream or vision is from God or the enemy.

## **Guiding Principles**

- Rarity is the norm: Someone with 100 YouTube videos which begin with, “Last night the Lord visited me and said...” should be watched with extreme caution.
- Clarity is the norm: Individuals who speak unduly professorially, speak in King James sounding language, incorporate a mix of Greek or Hebrew words, use an abundance of uncommon theological terms, etc. make the content of their presentation suspect.
- God speaking through professional clergy (via dreams and visions) will not be the norm: The Joel 2 prophecy is a promise to give dreams and visions to the ‘common man.’ Ordinary Christians having dreams and visions will become the norm.
- Being excited and precise should be the norm. Bloggers and YouTubers who begin with, “I had a vision from the Lord three or four months ago...” should be viewed with skepticism. Anyone who has received a vision would be excited, moved, and unless told to wait, they would be eager and ecstatic to share the dream/vision they received from the Lord.

## **Guiding questions to help discern whether or not a dream or vision has come from God**

**Is the message biblically sound?** A communication from the Lord will not, in any way, contradict God’s written Word.

**Does the messenger promise something contrary to Scripture?** Individuals have received dreams and visions at places such as Lourdes and Fatima—although these visions are

rather remarkable, they promise that if people pray a certain prayer, or pray to a particular person (not Jesus), then there will be peace in Israel. Such a promise is contrary to Scriptural promises and prophecies.

**Does the vision activate spiritual action or facilitate fear?** Scripture continually inspires the hearer to action and cautions against fear. View with skepticism those who share something like, “The Lord gave me a vision of an asteroid hitting the earth and everyone on the east coast died—I just wanted you to know.” Visions and dreams that follow the biblical model can exhort, but should also encourage, and direct individuals to particular courses of action.

**Does the messenger clearly note what is from God and what is his/her opinion?** Many Bloggers and YouTube videographers incorporate their views into the dream they claim they received from the Lord. Their presentation might begin like: “In the vision the Lord gave me I saw an eagle falling from the sky... That means America’s economy will fail by such and such date...” In general, sharing a dream is fine. Stating it is from the Lord can be reckless.

Interpreting the dream on your own is presumptuous. Truly let the Lord lead here. Share the interpretation only if God clearly provides one. Perhaps the Lord will give you a vision at some point in the future. If so, remember, dreams and visions are solemn spiritual communications. Be God’s mouthpiece, but do not overstep, over-share or over-interpret what the Lord has revealed.

**Does the messenger have a history of accuracy/integrity?** View those who have a history of providing precise dates and prophecies with caution—particularly if their ‘prophecies’ have been shown to be in error in the past. Bible prophets were 100% accurate. God is never confused about what He is trying to say.

**Does God receive the glory?** Is God the focus of the vision and presentation, or when sharing the dream or vision does the presenter make it more about themselves, their ministry, or their new book?

**Does the messenger seek to find plausible explanations for how the prophetic vision can take place?** There are a good number of individuals who claim to have visions of disasters (floods, earthquakes, etc.). When discussing their experience, they include that they consulted a local scientist or professor or expert to verify such an event could take place in the area predicted. God IS the expert. A dream or vision that is rightly from God will not require verification by any earthly authority on the subject. If God revealed it in a dream or vision, He is capable of making it happen.

**Does the message come out of a non-biblical environment?** Can God give any vision to any person, anywhere and at any time? Yes. However, we know Satan has an agenda. Dreams or visions which come from cultic sources are always suspect.

## Summary

In the Last Days, God will pour out His Spirit. It is not a probability; it is a promise. He will anoint and equip the unlikely in new and exciting ways. He will impart truth, insight, warnings, and encouragement to young and old, men and women, rich and poor. Believers should expect this but also be on the watch for false teaching. A watchman is called to be light to the world. They are to study, discern between right and wrong, and point out error (wisely and lovingly). Be aware of what is happening in the world. Follow the news. Be able to speak intelligently about prophetic events. Work hard to strengthen your witness.

The first step in being able to discern the truth is to be in relationship with the Jesus Christ Who referred to Himself as “the Way, the Truth and the Life” (John 14:6). Real hope and peace come when a sinner confesses their sins, turns to God, and accepts Jesus into their heart as Lord and Savior. From that decision flows forgiveness, joy, hope, and the promise of eternity in Heaven.

There will be dreams and visions and an outpouring of God’s Spirit in the last days. But there will also be unrest. There will be wars and rumors of wars, oppression, persecution and a great falling away from the truth. At the appointed time Jesus will return and rapture (rescue) His church from this world. Are you ready? Will you commit to being ALL IN for Him (which means you are committed to making serving Him, growing in Him, and witnessing for Him the priority of your life)? God expects believers to be active in well doing (Galatians 6:9). And know this: A great reward awaits those found doing the right thing, in the right way, at the right time, at the right place, and with the right heart when the Lord returns.

*“So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.” Matthew 24:44-46*