

# Visions and Dreams

## What's The Difference? Are They From God?

Rev. Sylvester Herbert

The words 'vision' and 'dream' are commonly used in every day speech. More often than not they convey the following meaning:

**Vision:** the ability to think about or plan the future with imagination or wisdom.

**Dream:** something one wants very much.

Dreams and visions are important to have in life for, as self-help author Napoleon Hill points out, they are "the blueprints of your ultimate achievements." The time is always right to reflect on where you want to go in life and how you are going to get there.

experiences? Here are some truths everyone should know:

1. There is difference between a dream and a vision. A dream is a series of thoughts, images, and sensations occurring in a person's mind during **sleep**. A vision is an experience in which you see things that do not exist physically while you are **awake**.
2. Dreams originate from different sources: **God** (Gen. 20:3; Gen. 28:10-12; Gen. 31: 11, 24; Judges 7:13-14; 1 Kings 3:5; Job 7:5) **Self** (Eccles. 5:3; Isa. 29:7-8) **The Devil**. It is not unreasonable to conclude that the devil is involved in some way in the nightmares that come just to frighten us (Dan. 2:1-13) and lead us astray from God (Jer. 23:27, 32). Significantly, many false religions have arisen based on someone's claims that they had a dream or a vision from God.
3. Dreams had varied functions in Bible times: instruction (Job 33:14; Matt. 1:20), warning (Gen. 20:3; Matt. 1:17-18), revelation of the future (Gen. 37:5-10), and encouragement (Judges 7:14-15).



Apart from this common usage, we read in Scripture of people having dreams and visions. Periodically, we may hear someone say God told / showed them something in a dream / vision. What are we to make of these mystical

4. Dreams and visions will be a part of the last days or the church age. Therefore, God can speak through visions and dreams whenever He chooses to (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17).



vision or some other means may be accurate yet not come from God (Acts 16:16-18). However, it is clear that God does not lie so all revelation from Him will be accurate.

5. In many parts of the world, there are reports of God using visions and dreams to bring people to Him. Most of these experiences occur in areas where there is little or no gospel message available, and where people do not have Bibles as is the case in many Muslim countries.

6. These timeless guidelines will help you to determine whether a particular dream / vision is from God:

- Does it agree with Scripture? A dream from God will not violate what He has already revealed in Scripture. “Dreams are never intended to create doctrine or establish a rule of faith or practice for all people at all times—only the Bible can do such a thing.”
- Is it accurate? Information revealed through a dream, a

- Is the fruit of the Spirit evident? The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). A dream or a vision from God will encourage not hinder the growth of these virtues in one’s life.
- Does it point to Jesus? If the dream or vision tempts you to put your trust in anything other than Jesus, then you know it cannot be from God (Deut. 13, 18; Rev. 19:10). ●