

Column

Dreams, we all have them, though most fly forgotten as the night. Once we are awake, they are gone. Another aspect of dreams is that things that would appear outlandish and impossible in our waking hours appear perfectly normal and natural when they are in progress.

Most dreams seem to be little more than a collage of memories and thoughts often drawn from what we experienced during the previous day or days. In most cases, they seem to have no real or lasting significance. But some do. At times, God uses them – especially in former times -- to convey a message.

For example, in Genesis 41, Pharoah is given a dream in which he sees two sets of cows, the first fat and well favored, the second skinny and ill favored. In the same night, he had a second dream in which he saw seven healthy heads of grain on a stalk, followed by seven thin scorched heads. God, speaking through Joseph, revealed to Pharoah that there was going to be seven good years followed by

seven bad years and that preparation needed to be made. Joseph, as you probably remember, was the one chosen to coordinate this preparation. His work paid off. Not only were the lives of many Egyptians saved but also those of his brothers and their families.

In the New Testament, another Joseph, Mary's husband, was warned in a dream not to return to their hometown of Nazareth but to take his wife and young Jesus to Egypt. By obeying, he put Jesus outside the reach of Herod who was seeking to destroy one he perceived to be a rival king.

Do dreams have significance today? I would want to answer yes but with caution. I make this qualification because God's full revelation has come in the person of His Son Jesus Christ. The veil separating heaven and earth has been pulled back. Therefore, dreams as a means God uses to speak to humans, at least partially, have been rendered redundant.

Nevertheless, God is sovereign and can and no doubt at times still use dreams. Some of the reasons might be to warn, comfort and instruct.

But again, caution is needed. The filter through which we must view and interpret dreams is Jesus, the Word Incarnate, and the Bible, God's Word Written. Any message contrary to these two should be put aside and not heard.

About a month ago I attended the funeral of a friend in Lakeland, Fla. About a week ago, I saw and spoke with that friend. I dreamed (this dream was in color) I was driving down the street where the family home is located. When I came to their driveway, I turned in and went into the house. There he was seated and appeared to be in robust health.

We greeted one another. Never once did it cross my mind that he was dead. Everything seemed completely normal. I remember I had in my hand some small electronic device, perhaps a charger, with which I was trying to do something. He said calmly, "Let me see it?" I handed it to him . . . and I woke up.

Was there any significance in this dream? I don't know. If there was, it might well have been those great truths taught in the Bible:

God is the God of the living which includes those who have passed behind the veil (Luke 20:38). Those who die in the Lord are with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:6-10). They are at peace and rest (Revelation 14:13). One day they will be raised up, given new bodies suited for life in God's new and restored creation (1 Corinthians 15, Revelation 21:1-5).

Without a doubt, God remains all powerful and speaks in many different ways. May we have ears to hear His voice and hearts to receive His message.

ALMIGHTY God, with whom do live the spirits of those who depart hence in the Lord, and with whom the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity; We give thee hearty thanks for the good examples of all those thy servants, who, having finished their course in faith, do now rest from their

labours. And we beseech thee, that we, with all those who are departed in the true faith of thy holy Name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in thy eternal and everlasting glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (The Book of Common Prayer)

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