

*The Interpretation of Dreams

Tuesday, April 11, 2023 6:55 AM

INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS

[HOOK]

1. We see dreams in the Bible. These we know are legit.
2. Many folks today have dreams.
3. Are all legit? Some legit? None legit?
4. Some sensational nonsense? Can we sort them out?
5. STAY TUNED for my understanding of this sensitive topic!

[INTRO GENERIC]

1. Hi. --- I'm Lee Brainard. --- Welcome to Soothkeep and another edition of Prophecy in the Crucible. My mission is TRUTH! The truth without varnish or tarnish. The truth without addition or subtraction. No matter the cost. Error always cost the people of God.

INTRODUCTION

- 1) **I am not a dream maven. I don't pursue them. I don't get excited about them. They are not a core part of my Christianity, my ministry, or my search for wisdom and understanding.**
 - a. But I do believe God occasionally uses dreams to convey encouragement, information, or direction to his flock.
 - b. I have had some dozen dreams over the past four decades which God used to direct my path and encourage me in difficult trials.
 - c. With this subject, as with so many, it behooves us to avoid extremes.
- 2) **Two extremes men often gravitate toward when dealing with dreams**
 - a. **FIRST --- the position that God never speaks through dreams anymore.**
 - i. Some get nervous about God guiding men with any means outside the statements of the Bible.
 - ii. You don't need to be jittery. Think about it!
 - a) God regularly guides our understanding of the Bible and our application of it through objective means
 - i) teachers, pastors, books, web articles, magazine articles
 - b) he also uses subjective means
 - i) providential occurrences, coincidences, inner peace, lack of inner peace
 - c) we may be led by any combination of these avenues to discern the leading of the Lord
 - d) where we should serve, who we should marry, what our gifting and calling is, and what is the correct understanding of passages and doctrinal issues
 - iii. truth is, dreams belong in the same category as these other subjective sources of guidance, so can be used with the same caution that we use the others
 - iv. Rightly used and rightly understood, these methods of guidance don't replace the Bible or undermine its authority. They point us in

the right Bible-honoring direction.

b. SECOND --- elevating dreams in a way that competes with the Bible

- i. some give dreams far too much prominence, looking for the voice of the Lord in all of their dreams
 - a) the relative rarity of revelational and providential dreams in the Bible should check this over-eager spirit
- ii. others embrace interpretations of dreams that promote unbiblical teaching or trample on biblical discernment
- iii. neither path is good, dreams should never be allowed to undermine the place or authority of Scripture

3) Biblical solution to avoid these two extremes

a. embrace TWO Bible principles

b. ONE --- God has exalted the word above all His name (Ps. 138:2)

- i. **IF** Bible exalted over all His Name (the Lord Jesus), **THEN** the Bible is exalted over every supposed communication outside the word of God that professedly comes in the name of the Lord, the Holy Spirit, the Father, Jesus, etc.
- ii. everybook, teacher, impression, prompting, leading, illumination, revelation, prophecy, vision, etc. **and every dream** MUST be ruthlessly tried by the word of God
- iii. no true communication from the Lord is threatened in the least by this testing, it will stand the test
- iv. This will shut down the efforts of deceiving spirits who want to sow confusion in your life and understanding
- v. If someone thinks every prompting or impression is from the Lord, they will allow themselves to be led on a wild goose chase by spirits pretending to be the Holy Spirit
 - i) Ditto for dreams.

c. TWO --- "Despise not prophecies" (1 Thess. 5:20)

- i. not going to press *prophesyings* in the sense of "thus saith the Lord" revelation but in its secondary sense of prophetic directives
- ii. prophetic directives = any leading from the Lord that was providentially brought into your life by God for a specific purpose, whether for insight or for direction
 - a) this may be a book or a passage in a book, a message or a line in a message, a conversation, a comment, a dream, a vision, an amazing coincidence --- anything God providentially directed your way
 - b) these do not come in the spirit of a hard-nosed pastor that demands that you submit to him (lying spirits do that)
 - c) they come in the spirit of a gracious pastor who allows you the space to walk in your own discernment as you learn to crawl, stand, walk, run, play sports
- iii. In my life a series of divine prophetic directives have guided my doctrinal and directional development
 - a) I have had a number of men, conversations, books, messages, thoughts, ideas, closed doors, open doors, and dreams come across my radar at critical times
 - b) these prophetic directives connected dots or pointed me to the next leg of my development
 - c) looking back there is an incredible symmetry and harmony to these prophetic directives

- d) yet none of them trampled on the prerogative of Scripture, on the contrary they upheld it

STARTING ASSUMPTIONS

- 1) **ONE --- Dreams are not the cutting edge of spirituality**
 - a. we don't need to have dreams to be spiritual
 - b. most believers don't have dreams
 - c. some believers have far more dreams than I do
 - d. there is no direct correlation between dreams and degree of spirituality
- 2) if you have had many dreams, don't let them go to your head
 - a. file them in the same category as providential guidance in general
 - b. EVERYBODY gets a mix of providential guidance from the Lord
 - c. we don't all get the same mix
 - d. no mix is more spiritual or privileged than any other mix
- 3) **TWO --- dreams can be discerned**
 - b. We don't have to fly blind when it comes to receiving or rejecting dreams
 - c. The word of God---its themes, teachings, principles---is the first key
 - d. common sense understanding of human psychology is the second key
 - i. NOTE---I did not say unbelieving, intellectual psychology
 - ii. NOTE---I said psychology, the observational knowledge of how humans respond to stimuli

PRINCIPLES OF DREAM INTERPRETATION

- 1) **Going to present a few helpful observations based on my understanding of Scripture and four decades of discernment**
 - a. these observations will help determine whether dream is wild imagination, spiritual exercise, or providential direction from the Lord
- 2) **FIRST OF ALL --- no dreams today are strict revelation ("thus saith the Lord")**
 - a. since the completion of the canon of scripture there is no "thus saith the Lord"
 - b. there will not be a new round of "thus saith the Lord" until after the rapture of the church, in the 70th week, with the exhaustive fulfillment of the outpouring of the Spirit prophesied in Joel --- Pentecost exhaustively fulfilled
 - c. **many are confused here**
 - i. FTR --- if it is true revelation, then it is "thus saith the Lord" and equal with Scripture, capable of superceding it or giving the official interpretation
 - ii. If it isn't "thus saith the Lord," if it isn't equal to Scripture, then it isn't revelation strictly speaking
 - iii. this doesn't mean the communication wasn't from the Lord
 - a) it simply means it isn't "thus saith the Lord" or direct verbatim communication from the Lord
 - b) it's providential communication of direction or illumination
 - iv. You definitely want to be careful here.
 - a) If you claim you have "thus saith the Lord" communications from God, you are setting yourself up to be judged as a false prophet
- 3) **Some will ask---what about the gift of prophecy?**
 - a. great question --- it is still here, but in a muted form
 - b. **prophecy in the sense of "thus saith the Lord"** passed with completion of the New Testament
 - anyone trying to replicate this places himself on dangerous ground

- path strewn with the wreckage of false prophets and heresies
 - c. ***prophecy in the sense of speaking the prophetic message to the church***, of being a watchman on the wall is a permanent ministerial gift
 - those with this gifting have exceptional illumination in the word of God in general and the prophetic word in particular
 - d. ***prophecy in the sense of prophetic directives*** is a permanent edification blessing for the church
 - these directives (for illumination and direction) come from many different sources (and may not even include dreams)
- 4) Rejecting "thus saith the Lord" communications from God doesn't diminish the value or utility of the communications that we do receive**
- a. The illuminations and direction that God brings across our path (whether from teachers, counsel, books, videos, providences, dreams, etc.) are just as truly from God as direct revelation.
 - b. But their purpose is different.
 - i. *direct revelation* gives us the direct, verbatim word of God
 - ii. *illumination* gives us tools to help us understand and apply the word of God in our life in our circumstances
 - iii. we don't need the former because we have the Bible, but we do not the latter, regardless of whether or not we receive dreams
 - c. would point out that many call their communications *revelations*
 - i. they are not claiming "thus saith the Lord" but merely using common language that they hear others using, (ditto for "the Lord told me" and "the Lord showed me")
 - ii. these terms and phrases are not ideal, because they help foster the common error of regarding our illuminations as "thus saith the Lord"
 - iii. when we use such words or terms, we greatly reduce our ability to be challenged by arguments from the Bible or history or straightforward facts
- 5) SECONDLY --- most dreams are not directly from God**
- a. *most dreams are traced to hopes or fears*
 - i. our subconscious mind grappling with fears and hopes like losing our way, feeling shamed, finding something of value, losing something of value, giving in to temptations, resisting temptations
 - ii. strong passions like anger or bitterness also cause dreams
 - b. *Some dreams are caused by external stimuli*
 - 1) I have had dreams of being in a sun-heated tent and wake up to find myself overheated because I have too many blankets on
 - 2) I have had dreams where I am taking a leak, and I wake up and have rush to the bathroom
 - 3) prescription narcotics give me vivid, weird nightmares
 - 4) too much sugar gives me discouraging dreams
 - 5) food can affect your dreams
 - c. *Some dreams are spiritual exercise*
 - i. not uncommon for the godly to have vivid dreams that are the spiritual mind grappling with spiritual matters at the subconscious level
 - ii. this is not illumination from God, this is you thinking about the things of God in your subconscious mind
 - iii. where you should go, what you should do
 - iv. teacher or pastor, stateside or missionary
 - d. don't be in a haste to regard your dream or dreams as communications

from God

- i. don't accept a dream as from the Lord unless it stands out as such

6) THIRDLY --- dreams mix information

- a. dreams often mix schools, jobs, houses, locations, circles of friends
- b. especially when subconscious mind working through hopes, wishes, and fears
- c. don't try to read meaning into the jumble of jumbled details
- d. this is typically neutral or generic information, the mixing means nothing
- e. This mixing in your hopes and fears dreams informs you that your hopes and fears don't change with your earthly circumstances
- f. This mixing in your spiritual exercise dreams informs you that your exercise doesn't change with your circumstances

7) FOURTHLY--- God does occasionally vouchsafe dreams to his followers

- a. again, they are not "thus saith the Lord" revelation that stands on same ground as Scripture
- b. they are either providential illumination or providential guidance
 - i. illumination sheds light on a passage or topic you have been wrestling with
 - ii. providence offers encouragement in your questions about direction
- c. Such dreams, or course, must be vetted by Scripture and common sense

8) these dreams should be interpreted on the same ground that we interpret any other providential directives given to us---like counsel, teaching, messages, intuitions,

- a. are they biblical?
- b. are they reasonable?
- c. are they seasonable?
- d. are they actionable?

9) FIFTHLY --- several characteristics of dreams from the Lord (Bible, my experience, my observation)

- a. **typically more vivid than normal dreams**
 - i. less random chaos, more like a movie scene
 - ii. Some of the OT dreams, for instance, were terrifyingly realistic
- i. **speak to a current concerns and questions**
 - i. Joseph worried about his circumstances, the Lord spoke in a dream (Matt 2)
 - ii. Nebuchadnezzar under exercise about the future, God responded with a dream (Dan. 2) that gave a brief history of the world from perspective of four empires
 - iii. Daniel, after the rise of Belshazzar, had a dream about the four empires (Dan. 7)
 - iv. Jacob's dreams in Gen 28 and 31 concern his life circumstances
 - v. Joseph's dreams in Gen 37 regard his future as a king
 - vi. Paul (Acts 16, 18) had dreams in the night (night visions) regarding God's direction and protection
 - vii. Christians in very difficult circumstances, folks weary of their religion and seeking Jesus in lands without readily available Bibles and churches are more likely to have a dream than the average Christian
- j. **they don't diminish with time**
 - i. you can't shake the impression that they are from God
 - ii. let months and years go by, they still have the divine fragrance
- a. **typically have ONE simple message**
 - i. this is the pattern of the dreams in the Bible

- ii. example ---account early Methodist dream, saw a preacher on a horse come to her gate
- iii. example---Iran, I am the way (go find a Bible and Bible believing church)
- iv. end times dreams often focus on a single judgment theme---fire from heaven, volcanoes, serpents coming up from the earth, prison camps

b. the content defies natural explanation

- i. can't be explained mere natural stimuli
- ii. can't be explained typical manifestations of hope and fear manifestations
- iii. can't be explained by run of the mill spiritual exercise manifesting itself in the subconscious mind while asleep
- iv. there is an element about the dream that rises above these things
- v. it neatly fits (without adjustments) a current question or circumstance in your life, or points to a future path perfectly suited to your natural and spiritual gifting

10) SIXTHLY --- three main types of dreams that can be prophetic illumination from the Lord

a. prophetic theme dreams:

- i. earthquakes, asteroid storms, mass volcanic eruptions, ground upheavals, prison camps, dystopian future
 - a) widespread among the people of God
 - b) don't read too much into the details, the main point is main point
- ii. typically no necessity to take these as prophetic illumination
 - a) usually just your spiritual exercise or sanctified imagination mulling over the word of God and prophetic teaching at the subconscious level
- iii. I have had recurring dreams for years of concentration camps, fire from heaven, widespread volcanism, ground upheavals
 - a) I don't take any of my dreams as new and useful information, simply chewing the cud on Bible teaching and insights from Bible teachers

b. biblical illumination

- i. insight into a subject you are studying
- ii. I have had a few dreams which gave me insight into a question I was dealing with
- iii. typically, if I didn't write these dreams down as soon as I woke up, I lost them
 - similar to flashes of inspiration during the day that seem to dematerialize if you don't write them down
 - writing them down seems to anchor them
- iv. often just your subconscious mind processing data in your sleep, so that the dream is comparable to a flash of intuition while awake

c. life direction

- i. information relative to your life path or to a big choice coming up
- ii. encouragement or hope in a painful situation
- iii. encouragement to your life ministry
- iv. insight on your gifting and calling
- v. I have had a number of brief dreams over the years that pointed to or encouraged me in my life call
- vi. But nothing I ever received in a dream added to or changed what I

discerned through the word of God, plain vanilla heart exercise,
and common sense ---nonetheless there was and still is genuine
encouragement in these dreams

- vii. again, often times these dreams are just your subconscious mind
bringing forth its conclusions after mulling on the subject

CONCLUSION

- 1) I trust that this has been a helpful examination of dreams.
- 2) Don't despise dreams. Don't overweight dreams.
- 3) Don't seek dreams. Don't anathematize dreams.
- 4) Just press on in your walk with the Lord.
- 5) If something comes up in your life and circumstances where a dream is the best
way to communicate to you, rest assured, God will give you a dream.

EYES WIDE OPEN, BRAIN ENGAGED, HEART ON FIRE