



Dreaming Dreams,

Seeing Visions

By Jim Poitras

“And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams” (Acts 2:17).

Helen Keller was a woman suffering from being both blind and deaf. She overcame these handicaps and raised money for the blind through the sale of her books and lectures. She was once asked, “What is worse than being blind?” She quickly responded, “Having sight but not being able to see.”

As Peter, on the Day of Pentecost repeated the Old Testament prophecy concerning the visitation of God’s Spirit upon all flesh, he reiterated that young men shall see visions, and old men shall dream dreams. The Wise Man in the Book of Proverbs 29:18 wrote, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.”

George Barna of the Barna Research Group in his book, *Power of Vision* defines vision as:

“Vision for ministry is a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants and is based upon an accurate understanding of God, self and circumstances.”

He also related that Duke Ellington, the late jazz musician and band leader was once asked to provide a definition of rhythm. “If you got it,” he replied, “you don’t need any definition. And if you don’t have it, there isn’t a definition that will help.”

Visions and dreams for ministry are like a picture of the way things can or should be in the future.

A village chief lay dying and wanted to choose a successor. He called his three sons and told them, “Sons, I am about to go to the place of the departed spirits and I must first choose one of you to be the next chief of this village. I want you to go to the yonder mountain, climb it, and bring me something from the mountain. Hurry because I will soon die. Life is quickly passing from me.”

The three sons hurried off to the mountain and individually began to climb it. After a couple of days the first son came and stood before the aged chief. He said, “Father, I have climbed high on the mountain and I have brought you a tree limb.” The chief asked him to go and wait for the return of the other two sons. Several days passed when the second son returned to the father. “Father, I have climbed high on the mountain and have gone above where the trees are. I have brought you a rock from the mountain,” he stated, visibly tired from the journey.

It seemed like a long time and the third son had not returned. Finally, he came and appeared before his father. “Father,” he began, “I have climbed high on the mountain. I have gone above where the trees are, and have climbed to the top. From the top of the mountain I could see far into the distance. I could see the river flowing, and smoke rising from distant huts. I saw the beauty of God’s creation. However, my dying father, I have nothing in my hand to bring you.” The old chief whispered, “You, my third son will lead my people because even though you have nothing in your hand to bring me, you do have something in your heart.”

What do you see?

Jesus questioned His disciples one day by saying, “Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?” (Mark 8:18).

Immediately following His statement, Jesus came to Bethsaida and they brought a blind man to Him. Jesus led this man, by the hand, out of the town, spit on his eyes, put His hands on him, and asked him if he could now see. The blind man looked up and said, “I see men as trees, walking.” Jesus wanted the man to have correct vision so He put His hands on his eyes once more and told him to look up again. This time “he was restored, and saw every man clearly” (Mark 8:23-25). It is interesting to note that He immediately asked His disciples, “Whom do men say that I am?” He was asking, “How do others see me?” then “What about you? How do you see me?”

Our prayer should become, “Lord give me eyes to see what you see. Give me ears to hear what the Spirit would have me to hear.”

What we see is a matter of perspective. In I Samuel 3:1 we are told the “Word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision.” Everyone was doing what they felt was right in their own sight. Eli, the man of God had failed to pass on the faith to his sons. The Bible records a tragic statement concerning them, “They knew not the Lord” (I Samuel 2:12). Into the hands of this spiritually impotent leader was placed the young boy, Samuel. Samuel did not yet know the Lord (3:7) and Eli was a man whose “eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see” (3:2). It took God calling Samuel three times before Eli realized it was a possibility God was revealing Himself to the boy. How tragic that Eli could not see.

In contrast, Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he went up into the mountain and God showed him the Promised Land. “His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated” (Deuteronomy 34:7). Perhaps the difference was revealed in Deuteronomy 34:10, “whom the Lord knew face to face.” Moses had a relationship with God, knew God face to face, and could see what God saw.

In the Old Testament we recall the story of the twelve spies sent to view the Promised Land. What these twelve spies were able to see was a matter of perspective (how they looked at it). They were told to look at the land (Numbers 13:18). They went and came back to Moses.

Perhaps Moses asked them upon their return “Men, what did you see?” Ten of them said, “There we saw giants...and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight” (13:33). However, two of them boldly stated, “Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it” (13:30). The other ten argued, “We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we...It is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature” (13:31-32).

The majority prevailed and wanted to stone the minority. The difference in the report of the two groups can be found in their perspective. The majority saw their abilities, and the giants. The minority saw above the giants to see God was bigger. Ten said, “We cannot” and two said, “We can.” It was the same with David and Goliath. The Israelites saw how small they were but David saw how big His God was. He proclaimed, “Is there not a cause?” (I Samuel 17:29).

Elijah reached the place where he cried out to God, “I am all alone.” That was what he saw. However, God said, “I’ve still got 7000 that have not bowed their knee to Baal” (I Kings 19:14,18).

If we can focus on Jesus Christ, and understand the attributes of God, we will believe God for great things and see things as He would have us to.

In 2 Kings 6:14-19 Elisha was in trouble for telling the King the secret battle plans of the King of Syria. He sent his men to capture Elisha.

Early in the morning Elisha's servant rose up and saw the city was compassed about with horses and chariots. Elisha comforted the servant by explaining those, "that be with us are more than they that be with them." Elisha knew the problem was with the way the servant saw things and prayed that the Lord would open his eyes. "And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." He then asked the Lord to smite the opponents with blindness. Zechariah was asked in Zechariah 4:2 "What seest thou?"

It is the will of God to open our eyes (Luke 4:18) and it is the devil's will to blind us (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Walt Kallestad in his book, *Wake Up Your Dreams*, wrote, "Dreams can help us see the invisible, believe the incredible, and achieve the impossible." Jesus was a builder of dreams and visions. Walt Kallestad also expressed how Jesus allowed people to fulfill their dreams in his following statements,

- Blind people who dreamed to see saw.
- Deaf people who dreamed to hear heard.
- Crippled people who dreamed to walk walked.
- Hungry people who dreamed to eat ate.
- Lonely people who dreamed of friends found friends.
- Anxious people who dreamed of peace found peace.
- Addicted people who dreamed of transformation were transformed.

Study Questions

1. What was Helen Keller's response to the question, "What is worse than being blind?" _____

2. What is "vision"? _____

3. Give two examples of Old Testament stories that would illustrate that what we see is a matter of perspective. _____

4. What is a Bible verse that talks about "vision"? _____

5. What can dreams help us see? _____

6. Give a Scripture that shows it is the will of the devil to keep us blinded. _____

7. What will happen when we focus our eyes on Jesus and His attributes. _____
