A person is silhouetted against a bright sunset, sitting on a rocky cliff. Below them is a vast, undulating sea of white clouds that stretches to the horizon. The sky is a mix of blue, orange, and yellow. The overall mood is contemplative and spiritual.

**God Speaks to  
His Prophets in  
Visions &  
In Dreams**

**Compiled By Dr. Harold Bollinger**

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## Forward

Joel 2:28

"Then after I have poured out my rains again, I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions.

Visions are basically the same as dreams, except that dreams happen while a person is in a state of sleep and visions will happen while the person is fully awake.

The reason that Dreams and Visions are prophetic is because they are to deal with the visual and seeing aspects of what God is saying.

I have had many dreams and visions in my life that were prophetic or giving a special message.

As a teen-ager, I was walking along a creek on our family farm. I looked into the sky of beautiful clouds, and I heard: "Feed my lambs and feed my sheep". From that moment, I know without doubt that I was to become a minister. At age 17, that vision became a reality.

I once saw many people wrapped in a large wire cage. I heard the Lord say: "I have called you to my elect".

I heard the voice of the Lord tell me to read the Bible from beginning to end many times. I began doing that. I ask the Lord to show me why this was important.

I saw myself standing before many people in a great auditorium. The minister in charge told me to minister to all the people on the right side of the auditorium. I asked the Lord what I should say or pray. I saw that everyone was sick in some way. The spirit of the Lord said, you cannot heal them.

Only the word of God can heal them”. I said, “Be healed in Jesus name. From that time on, I began to continually read and study the word of God.

Today, I stand full of the word of God, and have authored many books.

## Visions



### Chapter 1

#### Do not be afraid

Genesis 15:1

Afterward the Lord spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, “Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great.”

Why would Abram be afraid? Perhaps he feared revenge from the kings he had just defeated (Genesis 14:15). God gave him two good reasons for courage:

- (1) He promised to defend Abram (“I am your shield”), and
- (2) He promised to be Abram’s “very great reward.”

When you fear what lies ahead, remember that God will stay with you through difficult times and that he has promised you great blessings.

## God speaks to Jacob

Genesis 46:2-4

During the night God spoke to him in a vision. "Jacob! Jacob!" he called.

"Here I am," Jacob replied.

"I am God," the voice said, "the God of your father.

Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will see to it that you become a great nation there. I will go with you down to Egypt, and I will bring your descendants back again. But you will die in Egypt with Joseph at your side."

The Israelites did become a great nation, and Jacob's descendants eventually returned to Canaan. The book of Exodus recounts the story of Israel's slavery in Egypt for 400 years (fulfilling God's words to Abraham in Genesis 15:13-16), and the book of Joshua gives an exciting account of the Israelites entering and conquering Canaan, the Promised Land.

God told Jacob to leave his home and travel to a strange and faraway land. But God reassured him by promising to go with him and take care of him.

When new situations or surroundings frighten you, recognize that experiencing fear is normal. To be paralyzed by fear, however, is an indication that you question God's ability to take care of you.

Jacob never returned to Canaan. This was a promise to his descendants that they would return. "Joseph's own hand will close your eyes" refers to Joseph attending to Jacob as he faced death.

It was God's promise to Jacob that he would never know the bitterness of being lonely again.

### **God calls Samuel**

1 Samuel 3:10-15

And the Lord came and called as before, "Samuel! Samuel!"

And Samuel replied, "Yes, your servant is listening."

Then the Lord said to Samuel, "I am about to do a shocking thing in Israel.

I am going to carry out all my threats against Eli and his family.

I have warned him continually that judgment is coming for his family, because his sons are blaspheming God and he hasn't disciplined them. So I have vowed that the sins of Eli and his sons will never be forgiven by sacrifices or offerings."

Samuel stayed in bed until morning, then got up and opened the doors of the Tabernacle as usual. He was afraid to tell Eli what the Lord had said to him.

### **Ananias sees a vision**

Acts 9:10-12

Now there was a believer in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, calling, "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord!" he replied.

The Lord said, "Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you arrive, ask for Saul of Tarsus. He is praying to me right now.

I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying his hands on him so that he can see again."

Ananias was faithful to God and immediately obeyed his mission.

### **An angel appears to Cornelius**

Acts 10:3-6

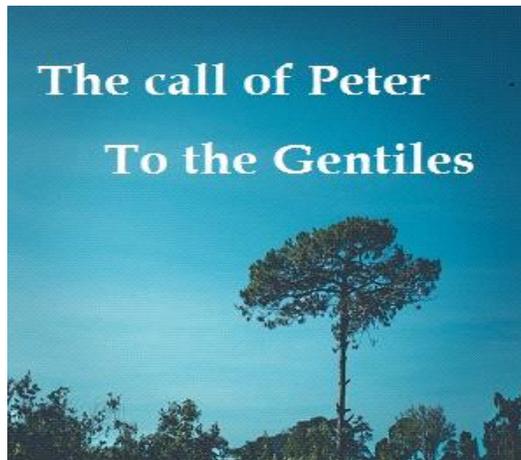
One afternoon about three o'clock, he had a vision in which he saw an angel of God coming toward him. "Cornelius!" the angel said.

Cornelius stared at him in terror. "What is it, sir?" he asked the angel. And the angel replied, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have not gone unnoticed by God!

Now send some men down to Joppa to find a man named Simon Peter. He is staying with Simon, a leatherworker who lives near the shore. Ask him to come and visit you."

God saw Cornelius's sincere faith. His prayers and generous giving were a "memorial offering before God," a sacrificial offering to the Lord. God answers the sincere prayers of those who seek him by sending the right person or the right information at the right time.

## **Chapter 2**



### **Peter is called to the gentiles.**

Acts 11:5-12

"One day in Joppa," he said, "While I was praying, I went into a trance and saw a vision. Something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners from the sky. And it came right down to me.

When I looked inside the sheet, I saw all sorts of small animals, wild animals, reptiles, and birds that we are not allowed to eat. And I heard a voice say, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat them.'

““Never, Lord,' I replied. 'I have never eaten anything forbidden by our Jewish laws.'

"But the voice from heaven came again, 'If God says something is acceptable, don't say it isn't.'

"This happened three times before the sheet and all it contained was pulled back up to heaven.

Just then three men who had been sent from Caesarea arrived at the

house where I was staying.

The Holy Spirit told me to go with them and not to worry about there being Gentiles. These six brothers here accompanied me, and we soon arrived at the home of the man who had sent for us.

When Peter brought the news of Cornelius's conversion back to Jerusalem, the believers were shocked that Peter had eaten with Gentiles.

After they heard the whole story, however, they praised God (Acts 11:18). Their reactions teach us how to handle disagreements with other Christians.

Before judging the behavior of fellow believers, it is important to hear them out. The Holy Spirit may have something important to teach us through them.

God had promised throughout Scripture that he would reach the nations. This began with his general promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:3; Genesis 18:18) and became very specific in Malachi's statement: "My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun" (Malachi 1:11).

But this was an extremely difficult truth for Jews, even Jewish believers, to accept. The Jewish believers understood how certain prophecies were fulfilled in Christ, but they overlooked other Old Testament teachings.

Too often we are inclined to accept only the parts of God's Word that appeal to us and support our own agendas, ignoring the teachings we don't like. We must accept all of God's Word as absolute truth.

Peter's defense for eating with Gentiles was a simple restatement of what happened. He brought six witnesses with him to back him up, and

then he quoted Jesus' promise about the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:16).

These Gentiles' lives had been changed, and that was all the evidence Peter and the other believers needed. Changed lives are an equally powerful evidence today.

### **A call for help**

Acts 16:9-10

That night Paul had a vision. He saw a man from Macedonia in northern Greece, pleading with him, "Come over here and help us."

So we decided to leave for Macedonia at once, for we could only conclude that God was calling us to preach the Good News there.

The "Spirit of Jesus" is another name for the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had closed the door twice for Paul, so Paul must have wondered which geographical direction to take in spreading the gospel.

Then, in a vision (Acts 16:9), Paul was given definite direction, and he and his companions obediently traveled into Macedonia. The Holy Spirit guides us to the right places, but he also guides us away from the wrong places.

As we seek God's will, it is important to know what God wants us to do and where he wants us to go, but it is equally important to know what God does not want us to do and where he does not want us to go.

## **Paul sees a vision**

Acts 18:9-10

One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision and told him, "Don't be afraid! Speak out! Don't be silent! For I am with you, and no one will harm you because many people here in this city belong to me."

In a vision, Christ told Paul that he had many people in Corinth. Sometimes we can feel alone or isolated, especially when we see wickedness all around us and when we are persecuted for our faith. Usually, however, there are others in the neighborhood or community who also follow Christ.

Ask God to lead you to them.

During the year and a half that Paul stayed in wicked Corinth, he established a church and wrote two letters to the believers in Thessalonica (the books of 1 and 2 Thessalonians).

Although Paul had been in Thessalonica for only a short time (Acts 17:1-15), he commended the believers there for their loving deeds, strong faith, and endurance inspired by hope.

While encouraging them to stay away from immorality, he dealt with the themes of salvation, suffering, and the second coming of Jesus Christ. Paul told them to continue to work hard while they awaited Christ's return.

Acts 26:12-19

"One day I was on such a mission to Damascus, armed with the authority and commission of the leading priests.

About noon, Your Majesty, a light from heaven brighter than the sun shone down on me and my companions.

We all fell down, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to fight against my will.'

“‘Who are you, sir?’ I asked.

"And the Lord replied, 'I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting.

Now stand up! For I have appeared to you to appoint you as my servant and my witness. You are to tell the world about this experience and about other times I will appear to you.

And I will protect you from both your own people and the Gentiles. Yes, I am going to send you to the Gentiles, to open their eyes so they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God's people, who are set apart by faith in me.'

"And so, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to that vision from heaven.

Paul took every opportunity to remind his audience that the Gentiles have an equal share in God's inheritance. This inheritance is the promise and blessing of the covenant that God made with Abraham (see Ephes. 2:19; 1 Peter 1:3-4). Paul's mission was to preach the Good News to the Gentiles.

### **Vision relates to the time of the end**

Daniel 8:17-19

As Gabriel approached the place where I was standing, I became so terrified that I fell to the ground. "Son of man," he said, "you must understand that the events you have seen in your vision relate to the time of the end."

While he was speaking, I fainted and lay there with my face to the ground. But Gabriel roused me with a touch and helped me to my feet. Then he said, "I am here to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath. What you have seen pertains to the very end of time.

The "time of the end," in this case, refers to the whole period from the end of the exile until the second coming of Christ. Many of the events that would happen under Antiochus IV Epiphanes will be repeated on a broader scale just before Christ's second coming.

During these times, God deals with Israel in a radically different way, with divine discipline coming through Gentile nations. This period is sometimes referred to as the "times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24).

#### Daniel 7:15-18

All I had seen troubled me, Daniel, and my visions terrified me. So I approached one of those standing beside the throne and asked him what it all meant. He explained it to me like this:

"These four huge beasts represent four kingdoms that will arise from the earth. But in the end, the holy people of the Most High will be given the kingdom, and they will rule forever and ever."

The "saints of the Most High" are the true Israel, the people ruled by the Messiah. Jesus Christ gave the kingdom to the new Israel, his church, made up of all faithful believers.

His coming ushered in the kingdom of God, and all believers are its citizens (see also Daniel 7:22, 27). Although God may allow persecution to continue for a while, the destiny of his followers is to possess the kingdom and be with him forever.

### **The vision of a plumb line**

Amos 7:7-9

Then he showed me another vision. I saw the Lord standing beside a wall that had been built using a plumb line. He was checking it with a plumb line to see if it was straight. And the Lord said to me, "Amos, what do you see?"

I answered, "A plumb line."

And the Lord replied, "I will test my people with this plumb line. I will no longer ignore all their sins. The pagan shrines of your ancestors and the temples of Israel will be destroyed, and I will bring the dynasty of King Jeroboam to a sudden end."

A plumb line is a device used to ensure the straightness of a wall. A wall that is not straight will eventually collapse.

God wants people to be right with him; he wants the sin that makes us crooked removed immediately. God's Word is the plumb line that helps us be aware of our sin.

How do you measure up to God's plumb line?

## **Chapter 3**



## **David predicted the coming of Jesus**

Luke 1:11-22

They said, "Men of Galilee, why are you standing here staring at the sky? Jesus has been taken away from you into heaven. And someday, just as you saw him go, he will return!"

The apostles were at the Mount of Olives when this happened, so they walked the half-mile back to Jerusalem. Then they went to the upstairs room of the house where they were staying. Here is the list of those who were present:

Peter,  
John,  
James,  
Andrew,  
Philip,  
Thomas,  
Bartholomew,  
Matthew,  
James (son of Alphaeus),  
Simon (the Zealot),  
And Judas (son of James).

They all met together continually for prayer, along with Mary the

mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus.

During this time, on a day when about 120 believers were present, Peter stood up and addressed them as follows:

"Brothers, it was necessary for the Scriptures to be fulfilled concerning Judas, who guided the Temple police to arrest Jesus. The Holy Spirit, speaking through King David, predicted this long ago.

Judas was one of us, chosen to share in the ministry with us." (Judas bought a field with the money he received for his treachery, and falling there, he burst open, spilling out his intestines.

The news of his death spread rapidly among all the people of Jerusalem, and they gave the place the Aramaic name Akeldama, which means "Field of Blood.")

Peter continued, "This was predicted in the book of Psalms, where it says, and 'Let his home become desolate, with no one living in it.' And again, 'Let his position be given to someone else.'

"So now we must choose another man to take Judas's place. It must be someone who has been with us all the time that we were with the Lord Jesus—from the time John baptized him until the day he was taken from us into heaven. Whoever is chosen will join us as a witness of Jesus' resurrection."

Angels are spirit beings who live in God's presence and do his will. Only two angels are mentioned by name in Scripture—Michael and Gabriel—but there are many who act as God's messengers. Here, Gabriel (Luke 1:19) delivered a special message to Zechariah. This was not a dream or a vision. The angel appeared in visible form and spoke audible words to the priest.

Zechariah, while burning incense on the altar, was also praying, perhaps for a son or for the coming of the Messiah. In either case, his prayer was answered. He would soon have a son, who would prepare the way for the Messiah. God answers prayer in his own way and in his own time. He worked in an “impossible” situation—Zechariah’s wife was barren—to bring about the fulfillment of all the prophecies concerning the Messiah. If we want to have our prayers answered, we must be open to what God can do in impossible situations. And we must wait for God to work in his way, in his time.

*John* means “the LORD is gracious,” and *Jesus* means “the LORD saves.” Both names were prescribed by God, not chosen by human parents. Throughout the Gospels, God acts graciously and saves his people. He will not withhold salvation from anyone who sincerely comes to him.

John was set apart for special service to God. He may have been forbidden to drink wine as part of the Nazirite vow, an ancient vow of consecration to God (see Numbers 6:1-8). Samson (Judges 13) was under the Nazirite vow, and Samuel may have been also (1 Samuel 1:11).

This is Luke’s first mention of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity; Luke refers to the Holy Spirit more than any other Gospel writer. Because Luke also wrote the book of Acts, we know he was thoroughly informed about the work of the Holy Spirit. Luke recognized and emphasized the Holy Spirit’s work in directing the founding of Christianity and in guiding the early church. The presence of the Spirit is God’s gift given to the entire church at Pentecost. Prior to that, God’s Spirit was given to the faithful for special tasks. We need the Holy Spirit’s help to do God’s work effectively.

John’s role was to be almost identical to that of an Old Testament prophet—to encourage people to turn away from sin and back to God.

John is often compared to the great prophet Elijah, who was known for standing up to evil rulers (Malachi 4:5; Matthew 11:14; Matthew 17:10-13). See Elijah's Profile.

In preparing people for the Messiah's arrival, John would do "heart transplants." He would take stony hearts and exchange them for hearts that were soft, pliable, trusting, and open to change. (See Ezekiel 11:19-20 and Ezekiel 36:25-29 for more on "heart transplants.") Are you as open to God as you should be? Or do you need a change of heart?

Zechariah thought it incredible that he and his wife, at their old age, could conceive a child. But what God promises, he delivers. And God delivers *on time!* You can have complete confidence that God will keep his promises. Their fulfillment may not be the next day, but they will be "at their proper time." If you are waiting for God to answer some request or to fill some need, remain patient. No matter how impossible God's promises may seem, what he has said in his Word will come true at the right time.

### **An angel speaks to the prophets**

Revelation 22:6

Then the angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true: 'The Lord God, who tells his prophets what the future holds, has sent his angel to tell you what will happen soon.' "

### **A vision of a red horse**

## Zechariah 1:8

In a vision during the night, I saw a man sitting on a red horse that was standing among some myrtle trees in a small valley. Behind him were red, brown, and white horses, each with its own rider.

The man among the myrtle trees was the angel of the Lord (Zech. 1:11). The horses and their colors were symbols of God's involvement in world governments. The full meaning of the colors is unknown, although the red horse is often associated with war and the white horse with final victory.

The angel of the Lord saw that all the nations were secure and at peace while Israel was still oppressed and despised. But God was planning a change. He had released his people, and he would allow them to return and rebuild his temple.

Seventy years was the time that God had decreed for Israel to remain in captivity (Jeremiah 25:11; Jeremiah 29:10). This time was over, and the angel asked God to act swiftly to complete the promised return of his people to Jerusalem.

God's people had lived under his judgment for 70 years during their captivity in Babylon. But here God spoke words of comfort and assurance. God promises that when we return to him, he will heal us (Hosea 6:1). If you feel wounded and torn by the events of your life, turn to God so he can heal and comfort you.

Although the pagan nations afflicted God's people beyond his intentions, God was not powerless to stop them. God used these nations to punish his sinful people. When the nations went beyond his plans by trying to destroy Israel as a nation, he intervened.

## **A vision of a coming storm**

Ezekiel 1:4-28

As I looked, I saw a great storm coming toward me from the north, driving before it a huge cloud that flashed with lightning and shone with brilliant light. The fire inside the cloud glowed like gleaming amber.

From the center of the cloud came four living beings that looked human, except that each had four faces and two pairs of wings.

Their legs were straight like human legs, but their feet were split like calves' feet and shone like burnished bronze. [8] Beneath each of their wings I could see human hands.

The wings of each living being touched the wings of the two beings beside it. The living beings were able to fly in any direction without turning around.

Each had a human face in the front, the face of a lion on the right side, the face of an ox on the left side, and the face of an eagle at the back.

Each had two pairs of outstretched wings—one pair stretched out to touch the wings of the living beings on either side of it, and the other pair covered its body.

They went in whatever direction the spirit chose, and they moved straight forward in all directions without having to turn around.

The living beings looked like bright coals of fire or brilliant torches, and it looked as though lightning was flashing back and forth among them.

And the living beings darted to and fro like flashes of lightning. As I looked at these beings, I saw four wheels on the ground beneath them, one wheel belonging to each.

The wheels sparkled as if made of chrysolite. All four wheels looked the same; each wheel had a second wheel turning crosswise within it.

The beings could move forward in any of the four directions they faced, without turning as they moved. The rims of the four wheels were awesomely tall, and they were covered with eyes all around the edges.

When the four living beings moved, the wheels moved with them. When they flew upward, the wheels went up, too.

The spirit of the four living beings was in the wheels. So wherever the spirit went, the wheels and the living beings went, too.

When the living beings moved, the wheels moved. When the living beings stopped, the wheels stopped. When the living beings flew into the air, the wheels rose up. For the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels.

There was a surface spread out above them like the sky. It sparkled like crystal. Beneath this surface the wings of each living being stretched out to touch the others' wings, and each had two wings covering its body.

As they flew their wings roared like waves crashing against the shore, or like the voice of the Almighty, or like the shouting of a mighty army. When they stopped, they let down their wings.

As they stood with their wings lowered, a voice spoke from beyond the crystal surface above them.

Above the surface over their heads was what looked like a throne made of blue sapphire. And high above this throne was a figure whose appearance was like that of a man.

From his waist up, he looked like gleaming amber, flickering like a fire.

And from his waist down, he looked like a burning flame, shining with splendor.

All around him was a glowing halo, like a rainbow shining through the clouds. This was the way the glory of the Lord appeared to me.

When I saw it, I fell face down in the dust, and I heard someone's voice speaking to me.

In this first vision, God called Ezekiel to be a prophet (see Ezekiel 2:5). Nothing in Ezekiel's previous experience had prepared him for such a display of God's glorious presence and power.

The immense cloud flashed with lightning and was surrounded by a brilliant light. From the fire in the cloud came four living creatures. They showed Ezekiel that Jerusalem's coming destruction was God's punishment of Judah for its sins. (These living creatures are also seen in Rev. 4:6-7.)

When Ezekiel received this vision, he was far away from the temple in Jerusalem, the physical symbol of God's presence. Through this vision, he learned that God is present everywhere and that God's activities in heaven are shaping the events on earth.

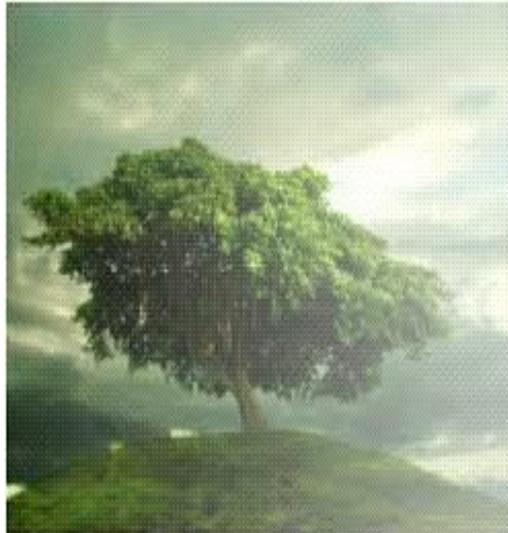
Each of the four living creatures had four faces, symbolizing God's perfect nature. Some believe that the lion represented strength; the ox, diligent service; the man, intelligence; and the eagle, divinity. Others see these as the most majestic of God's creatures and say that they therefore represent God's whole creation.

The early church fathers saw a connection between these beings and the four Gospels: the lion with Matthew, presenting Christ as the Lion of Judah; the ox with Mark, portraying Christ as the Servant; the human with Luke, portraying Christ as the perfect human; the eagle with John, portraying Christ as the Son of God, exalted and divine.

The vision of John in Rev. 4 parallels Ezekiel's vision.

The “wheel intersecting a wheel” was probably two wheels at right angles to each other, one on a north south and the other on an east-west axis. Able to move anywhere, these wheels show that God is present everywhere and is able to see all things (Ezekiel 1:18). God is not restricted to Jerusalem, but rules all of life and history. Though the exiles had experienced great change, God was still in control.

## **Chapter 4**



### **A vision of a large tree**

Daniel 4:10-17

" 'While I was lying in my bed, this is what I dreamed. I saw a large tree in the middle of the earth.

The tree grew very tall and strong, reaching high into the heavens for all the world to see.

It had fresh green leaves, and it was loaded with fruit for all to eat. Wild animals lived in its shade, and birds nested in its branches. The entire world was fed from this tree.

““Then as I lay there dreaming, I saw a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven. The messenger shouted, "Cut down the tree; lop off its branches! Shake off its leaves, and scatter its fruit! Chase the animals from its shade and the birds from its branches.

But leave the stump and the roots in the ground, bound with a band of iron and bronze and surrounded by tender grass. Now let him be

drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him live like an animal among the plants of the fields.

For seven periods of time, let him have the mind of an animal instead of a human. For the messengers have decreed this; the holy ones command it.

The purpose of this decree is that the whole world may understand that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses—even to the lowliest of humans."

Although Nebuchadnezzar praised Daniel's God, he still did not believe in him completely or submit to him alone (Daniel 4:8). Many people attend church and use spiritual language, but they really don't believe in God or obey him. Profession doesn't always mean possession. How do your beliefs match with your obedience?

One of the most difficult lessons to learn is that God is sovereign. He is above all of those who are above us. He limits the power and authority of all the government, business, and religious leaders in the world.

Those who live in freedom and with a relatively high degree of autonomy find this difficult to understand. While we may feel as though we are free to do what we please, God is sovereign over all of our plans and desires.

When Daniel understood Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he was stunned, and he wondered how to break the news.

He told the king he wished what the dream foreshadowed would happen to the king's enemies and not to Nebuchadnezzar.

How could Daniel be so deeply grieved at the fate of Nebuchadnezzar—the king who was responsible for the destruction of Daniel’s home and nation? Daniel had forgiven Nebuchadnezzar, and so God was able to use Daniel.

Very often when someone has wronged us, we find it difficult to forget the past. We may even be glad when that person suffers. Forgiveness means putting the past behind us.

Can you love someone who has hurt you? Can you serve someone who mistreated you? Ask God to help you forgive, forget, and love. God may use you in an extraordinary way in that person’s life!

### **Daniel sees beast coming up out of the water**

Daniel 7:2-15

In my vision that night, I, Daniel, saw a great storm churning the surface of a great sea, with strong winds blowing from every direction. Then four huge beasts came up out of the water, each different from the others.

The first beast was like a lion with eagles' wings. As I watched, its wings were pulled off, and it was left standing with its two hind feet on the ground, like a human being. And a human mind was given to it.

Then I saw a second beast, and it looked like a bear. It was rearing up on one side, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And I heard a voice saying to it, "Get up! Devour many people!"

Then the third of these strange beasts appeared, and it looked like a leopard. It had four wings like birds' wings on its back, and it had four

heads. Great authority was given to this beast.

Then in my vision that night, I saw a fourth beast, terrifying, dreadful, and very strong. It devoured and crushed its victims with huge iron teeth and trampled what was left beneath its feet. It was different from any of the other beasts, and it had ten horns.

As I was looking at the horns, suddenly another small horn appeared among them. Three of the first horns were wrenched out, roots and all, to make room for it. This little horn had eyes like human eyes and a mouth that was boasting arrogantly.

I watched as thrones were put in place and the Ancient One sat down to judge. His clothing was as white as snow, his hair like whitest wool. He sat on a fiery throne with wheels of blazing fire, and a river of fire flowed from his presence.

Millions of angels ministered to him, and a hundred million stood to attend him. Then the court began its session, and the books were opened.

I continued to watch because I could hear the little horn's boastful speech. I kept watching until the fourth beast was killed and its body was destroyed by fire.

As for the other three beasts, their authority was taken from them, but they were allowed to live for a while longer.

As my vision continued that night, I saw someone who looked like a man coming with the clouds of heaven.

He approached the Ancient One and was led into his presence.

He was given authority, honor, and royal power over all the nations of the world, so that people of every race and nation and language would obey him. His rule is eternal—it will never end. His kingdom will never

be destroyed.

I, Daniel, was troubled by all I had seen, and my visions terrified me.

Daniel had many dreams and visions he did not understand. He dreamed of four beasts, which represented four kingdoms of the world, and of a ram and goat, which depicted two of those kingdoms in greater detail.

Daniel's visions reveal that the Messiah will be the ruler of a spiritual kingdom that will overpower and overshadow all other earthly kingdoms.

These visions help us see that we should interpret all of history in light of God's eternal kingdom.

Chronologically, this chapter takes place before chapter five. At this time, Belshazzar had just been given a position of authority (553 B.C.), and Daniel was probably in his late sixties.

The first six chapters of Daniel present history; the last six chapters are visions relating mainly to the future.

Daniel had a vision of four great beasts, each representing a world empire. This was similar to Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter two.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream covered the political aspects of the empires; Daniel's dream depicted their moral characteristics.

These nations, which would reign over Israel, were evil and cruel; but Daniel also saw God's everlasting, indestructible kingdom arrive and conquer them all.

The lion with an eagle's wings represents Babylon with her swift conquests (statues of winged lions have been recovered from Babylon's ruins).

The bear that ravaged the lion is Medo-Persia.

The three ribs in its mouth represent the conquests of three major enemies.

The leopard is Greece. Its wings show the swiftness of Alexander the Great's campaign as he conquered much of the civilized world in four years (334-330 B.C.).

The leopard's four heads are the four divisions of the Greek empire after Alexander's death.

The fourth beast points to both Rome and the end times. Many Bible scholars believe that the horns correspond to ten kings who will reign shortly before God sets up his everlasting kingdom.

These ten kings had still not come to power at the time of John's vision recorded in the book of Revelation (Rev. 17:12).

The little horn is a future human ruler or the antichrist (see also 2 Thes. 2:3-4). God is illustrating the final end of all worldly kingdoms in contrast to his eternal kingdom.

Here the prophecy shifts to the end times. This judgment scene is similar to one that was seen by the apostle John (Rev. 1:14-15). The Ancient of Days is almighty God, who assigns power to kingdoms and who will himself judge those kingdoms in the end.

Daniel saw God judging millions of people as they stood before him. We all must stand before almighty God and give an account of our lives.

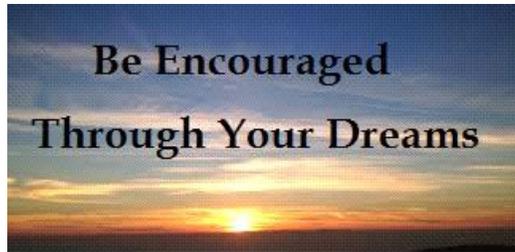
If your life were judged by God today, what would he say about it? How would he measure it against his will for us?

We should live each day with the full awareness that we must appear before God to give account for how we used our lives. How will your life measure up?

The slaying of the beast represents the fall of Rome. While this beast was destroyed, the other beasts were allowed to live for a period of time. The kingdoms (or their cultures) continued to be recognizable in some form; history did not end when God intervened with his judgment.

This “one like a son of man” is the Messiah. Jesus used this verse to refer to himself (Matthew 26:64; Luke 21:27; John 1:51). The clouds of heaven portray the Son of Man as divine; throughout the Bible clouds represent his majesty and awesome presence. God’s glory appeared in a cloud in Exodus 16:10 and Exodus 19:9 at the giving of the law at Sinai.

## **Dreams**



## **King Abimelech warned in a dream**

Genesis 20:3

But one night God came to Abimelech in a dream and told him, "You are a dead man, for that woman you took is married."

Abraham had used this same trick before to protect himself (Genesis 12:11-13). Although Abraham is one of our heroes of faith, he did not learn his lesson well enough the first time.

In fact, by giving in to the temptation again, he risked turning a sinful act into a sinful pattern of lying whenever he suspected his life was in danger.

No matter how much we love God, certain temptations are especially difficult to resist. These are the vulnerable spots in our spiritual armor. As we struggle with these weaknesses, we can be encouraged to know that God is watching out for us just as he did for Abraham.

Abimelech had unknowingly taken a married woman to be his wife and was about to commit adultery.

But God somehow prevented him from touching Sarah and held him back from sinning. What mercy on God's part!

How many times has God done the same for us, holding us back from sin in ways we can't even detect? We have no way of knowing—we just

know from this story that he can. God works just as often in ways we can't see as in ways we can.

### **Jacob sees angels of God**

Genesis 28:11-22

At sundown he arrived at a good place to set up camp and stopped there for the night. Jacob found a stone for a pillow and lay down to sleep.

As he slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from earth to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down on it.

At the top of the stairway stood the Lord, and he said, "I am the Lord, the God of your grandfather Abraham and the God of your father, Isaac. The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I will give it to you and your descendants.

Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth! They will cover the land from east to west and from north to south. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants.

What's more, I will be with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. I will someday bring you safely back to this land. I will be with you constantly until I have finished giving you everything I have promised."

Then Jacob woke up and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I wasn't even aware of it."

He was afraid and said, "What an awesome place this is! It is none other than the house of God—the gateway to heaven!" [18] The next morning

he got up very early. He took the stone he had used as a pillow and set it upright as a memorial pillar.

Then he poured olive oil over it.

He named the place Bethel—"house of God"—though the name of the nearby village was Luz.

Then Jacob made this vow: "If God will be with me and protect me on this journey and give me food and clothing, and if he will bring me back safely to my father, then I will make the Lord my God.

This memorial pillar will become a place for worshiping God, and I will give God a tenth of everything he gives me."

Jacob did everything, both right and wrong, with great zeal. He deceived his own brother Esau and his father Isaac.

He wrestled with an angel and worked fourteen years to marry the woman he loved. Through Jacob we learn how a strong leader can also be a servant. We also see how wrong actions will always come back to haunt us.

God's covenant promise to Abraham and Isaac was offered to Jacob as well. But it was not enough to be Abraham's grandson; Jacob had to establish his own personal relationship with God.

God has no grandchildren; each of us must have a personal relationship with him. It is not enough to hear wonderful stories about Christians in your family. You need to become part of the story yourself (see Galatians 3:6-7).

Bethel was about ten miles north of Jerusalem and 60 miles north of Beersheba, where Jacob left his family.

This was where Abraham made one of his first sacrifices to God when he entered the land.

At first, Bethel became an important center for worship; later, it was a center of idol worship.

The prophet Hosea condemned its evil practices.

Was Jacob trying to bargain with God? It is possible that he, in his ignorance of how to worship and serve God, treated God like a servant who would perform a service for a tip.

More likely, Jacob was not bargaining, but pledging his future to God. He may have been saying, in effect, "Because you have blessed me, I will follow you."

Whether Jacob was bargaining or pledging, God blessed him. But God also had some difficult lessons for Jacob to learn.

## Chapter 5



### **Dream of barley bread**

Judges 7:13-15

Gideon crept up just as a man was telling his friend about a dream. The man said, "I had this dream, and in my dream a loaf of barley bread came tumbling down into the Midianite camp. It hit a tent, turned it over, and knocked it flat!"

His friend said, "Your dream can mean only one thing—God has given Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite, victory over all the armies united with Midian!"

When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he thanked God. Then he returned to the Israelite camp and shouted, "Get up! For the Lord has given you victory over the Midianites!"

An enemy soldier dreamed of a loaf of barley bread tumbling into camp. Barley grain was only half the value of wheat, and the bread made from it was considered inferior.

In the same way, Israel's tiny band of men was considered inferior to the vast forces of Midian and Amalek. But God would make the underdog Israelites seem invincible

### **Joseph dreams of bundles of grain**

Genesis 37:5-10

One night Joseph had a dream and promptly reported the details to his brothers, causing them to hate him even more. "Listen to this dream," he announced. "We were out in the field tying up bundles of grain. My bundle stood up, and then your bundles all gathered around and bowed low before it!"

"So you are going to be our king, are you?" his brothers taunted. And they hated him all the more for his dream and what he had said.

Then Joseph had another dream and told his brothers about it. "Listen to this dream," he said. "The sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed low before me!"

This time he told his father as well as his brothers, and his father rebuked him. "What do you mean?" his father asked. "Will your mother, your brothers, and I actually come and bow before you?"

Joseph's brothers were already angry over the possibility of being ruled by their little brother. Joseph then fueled the fire with his immature attitude and boastful manner.

No one enjoys a braggart. Joseph learned his lesson the hard way. His angry brothers sold him into slavery to get rid of him. After several years of hardship, Joseph learned an important lesson:

Because our talents and knowledge come from God, it is more appropriate to thank him for them than to brag about them. Later, Joseph gives God the credit (Genesis 41:16).

### **God speaks to Joseph in a dream concerning Mary**

Matthew 1:20

As he considered this, he fell asleep, and an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to go ahead with your marriage to Mary. For the child within her has been conceived by the Holy Spirit.

The conception and birth of Jesus Christ are supernatural events beyond human logic or reasoning. Because of this, God sent angels to help certain people understand the significance of what was happening (see Matthew 2:13, 19; Luke 1:11, 26; Luke 2:9).

Angels are spiritual beings created by God who help carry out his work on earth.

They bring God's messages to people (Luke 1:26), protect God's people (Daniel 6:22),

Offer encouragement (Genesis 16:7ff), give guidance (Exodus 14:19),

Carry out punishment (2 Samuel 24:16), patrol the earth (Zech. 1:9-14), and fight the forces of evil (2 Kings 6:16-18; Rev. 20:1-2).

There are both good and bad angels (Rev. 12:7), but because bad angels are allied with the devil, or Satan, they have considerably less power and authority than good angels.

Eventually the main role of angels will be to offer continuous praise to God (Rev. 7:11-12).

The angel declared to Joseph that Mary's child was conceived by the Holy Spirit and would be a son.

This reveals an important truth about Jesus—he is both God and human.

The infinite, unlimited God took on the limitations of humanity so he could live and die for the salvation of all who would believe in him.

### **Nebuchadnezzar seeks meaning of a dream**

Daniel 2:1-3

One night during the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that disturbed him so much that he couldn't sleep.

He called in his magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers, and he demanded that they tell him what he had dreamed. As they stood before the king, he said,

"I have had a dream that troubles me. Tell me what I dreamed, for I must know what it means."

Dreams were considered to be messages from the gods, and the wise men were expected to interpret them. Usually the wise men could give

some sort of interpretation as long as they knew what the dream was about.

This time, however, Nebuchadnezzar demanded to be told the dream also.

God sent a series of dreams to Nebuchadnezzar with prophetic messages that could be revealed and understood only by a servant of God.

People from other time periods who received dreams from God include Jacob (Genesis 28:10-15), Joseph (Genesis 37:5-11), Pharaoh's cupbearer and his baker (Genesis 40), Pharaoh (Genesis 41), Solomon (1 Kings 3:5-15), and Joseph (Matthew 1:20-24).

### **Joseph tells meaning of dream**

Genesis 40:8

And they replied, "We both had dreams last night, but there is no one here to tell us what they mean."

"Interpreting dreams is God's business," Joseph replied. "Tell me what you saw."

When the subject of dreams came up, Joseph focused everyone's attention on God. Rather than using the situation to make himself look good, he turned it into a powerful witness for the Lord.

One secret of effective witnessing is to recognize opportunities to relate God to the other person's experience. When the opportunity arises, we must have the courage to speak, as Joseph did.

## **Prophets communicate by dreams and visions**

Numbers 12:6

And the Lord said to them, "Now listen to me! Even with prophets, I the Lord communicate by visions and dreams.

## **Prophets may dream dreams**

Deuteronomy 13:1-5

"Suppose there are prophets among you, or those who have dreams about the future, and they promise you signs or miracles, and the predicted signs or miracles take place.

If the prophets then say, 'Come, let us worship the gods of foreign nations,' do not listen to them. The Lord your God is testing you to see if you love him with all your heart and soul.

Serve only the Lord your God and fear him alone. Obey his commands, listen to his voice, and cling to him.

The false prophets or dreamers who try to lead you astray must be put to death, for they encourage rebellion against the Lord your God, who brought you out of slavery in the land of Egypt. Since they try to keep you from following the Lord your God, you must execute them to remove the evil from among you.

God does not always lead attractive leaders. Moses warned the Israelites against false prophets who encouraged worship of other gods.

New ideas from inspiring people may sound good, but we must judge them by whether or not they are consistent with God's Word.

When people claim to speak for God today, check them in these areas:  
Are they telling the truth? Is their focus on God?

Are their words consistent with what you already know to be true? Some people speak the truth while directing you toward God, but others speak persuasively while directing you toward themselves.

It is even possible to say the right words but still lead people in the wrong direction. God is not against new ideas, but he is for discernment. When you hear a new, attractive idea, examine it carefully before getting too excited.

False prophets are still around today. The wise person will carefully test ideas against the truth of God's Word.

### **Dreams and visions are the result of the Holy Spirit**

Joel 2:28

"Then after I have poured out my rains again, I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions.

Peter quoted this passage (see Acts 2:16-21)—the outpouring of the Spirit predicted by Joel occurred on Pentecost.

While in the past, God's Spirit seemed available to kings, prophets, and judges, Joel envisioned a time when the Spirit would be available to every believer.

Ezekiel also spoke of an outpouring of the Spirit (Ezekiel 39:28-29). God's Spirit is available now to anyone who calls on the Lord (Joel 2:32).

These “wonders” would give a hint or a picture of a coming event.

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