

0961 Biblical Principles from New Testament Visions

Visions and dreams are similar in many ways. They are like seeds that when planted by the Holy Spirit, must be nurtured and cared for if they are to grow into reality in our lives. They must be watered, weeded and ultimately harvested. You water them with prayer. You weed them by discerning the spirit behind them and eliminating those that are not from God. You harvest them by being faithful to the visions or dreams and holding them in your heart until you have them in your grasp through your obedience. In this lesson we will look at examples of visions in the New Testament.

Matthew 17:1-9

*“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; 2} and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. {3} And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. {4} Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” {5} While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” {6} And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. {7} But Jesus came and touched them and said, **“Arise, and do not be afraid.”** {8} When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. {9} Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, **“Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.”**”*

PRINCIPLE 1. A vision is made known for a specific time and purpose.

In this case, it was to be spoken of after Jesus was resurrected, but not before.

Zacharias' Vision in the Temple

Luke 1:5-22

Zacharias was a elderly priest who encountered the angel Gabriel

in the temple. The angel announced that Zacharias' wife would bear a son whose name would be John (the Baptist). His son would become the great evangelist and prophet of God. He would be the one to announce the coming of Christ. However, because of his advanced age, Zacharias doubted the word of God's angel.

Luke 1:17-22 (NLT)

*"Zechariah said to the angel, **"How can I be sure this will happen? I'm an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years."** {18} Then the angel said, **"I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. It was he who sent me to bring you this good news! {20} But now, since you didn't believe what I said, you will be silent and unable to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly be fulfilled at the proper time."** {21} Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah to come out of the sanctuary, wondering why he was taking so long. {22} When he finally did come out, he couldn't speak to them. **Then they realized from his gestures and his silence that he must have seen a vision in the sanctuary.***

When Zacharias came out of the temple, he could not speak. Those who saw him realized **"he must have seen a vision in the sanctuary."** Gabriel's words, of course, came true.

PRINCIPLE 2. Visions have prophetic qualities because they are messages from God. In some visions, we hear from angels, who are God's messenger. What they speak is from God and therefore, it is truth.

Meeting Jesus on the Road to Emmaus

Luke 24:13-23

Following Jesus' resurrection, two believers were traveling to Emmaus, when they met the risen Lord. However, their eyes were divinely restrained, so they did not recognize Him. The Lord asked them what it was they were talking about? Cleopas, one of the two travelers, answered Jesus. He said, *"a vision of angels who said He was alive"* was seen by *"certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early."* (Verse 23)

PRINCIPLE 3. A vision may be given to us so it can be reported to others, thus spreading its message.

As with the previous principle, a vision may be given with an angel. It may also be given in various other ways.

Saul of Tarsus and Ananias Had Visions.

Acts 9:10-18

The Lord spoke to both Saul of Tarsus and Ananias in visions. He gave instructions to each. His purpose for these two visions was that Saul could receive his sight, so he could begin his missionary work.

Acts 9:10-12, 15-18 (NKJV)

*"Now there was a believer in Damascus named Ananias. **The Lord spoke to him in a vision, calling, "Ananias!"** "Yes, Lord!" he replied. {11} The Lord said, **"Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you get there, ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying to me right now. {12} I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying hands on him so he can see again."**... {15} But the Lord said, **"Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. {16} And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake."** {17} So Ananias went and found Saul. He laid his hands on him and said, **"Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."** {18} Instantly something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized."*

PRINCIPLE 4. Jesus, Himself, may appear to us in visions, in which He will give commands and instructions.

PRINCIPLE 5. In a vision, conversations between God and the person receiving it may occur... or the conversation may be between God's angel and the person receiving it.

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Cornelius Had a Vision.

Acts 10:1-8

Cornelius was a devout, praying and God fearing Roman soldier. He received a vision, in which an angel of the Lord spoke to him. The angel told Cornelius that his prayers had been answered. Then the angel told him to send for Simon Peter, and that Peter would tell him what to do. Scripture tells us it was *“About the ninth hour.”* This translates to about three o’clock in the afternoon.

Acts 10:3 (NKJV)

“About the ninth hour of the day, he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, “Cornelius!”

Acts 10:3-6 (NIV)

“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. {4} 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 been received by God as an offering! {5} Now send some men to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. {6} He is staying with Simon, a tanner who lives near the seashore.””

PRINCIPLE 6. In a vision, a word of wisdom (Verse 5) and a word of knowledge may work together (Verses 6) as one complete message.

The word of wisdom was to send men to Joppa and summon Peter. This thought is incomplete without the angel telling Cornelius where it was that Peter was staying with Simon the tanner (a word of knowledge). Do not try to artificially separate the two words.

Peter’s Trance Led to a Vision from God

Acts 10:9-22

The original Greek word for *“trance”* used in Acts 10:10 is *“ekstasis.”* It is defined as “that state in which the external senses and the volition are suspended, and all his impressions are

derived from within.” (Strong’s Concordance G1611) This means that the person in the trance has his natural senses suspended and is no longer aware of what’s happening around him.

Acts 10:9-22 (NKJV)

*“The next day as Cornelius’s messengers were nearing the town, Peter went up on the flat roof to pray. It was about noon, {10} and he was hungry. But while a meal was being prepared, **he fell into a trance.** {11} He saw the sky open, and something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners. {12} In the sheet were all sorts of animals, reptiles, and birds. {13} **Then a voice said to him,** “Get up, Peter; kill and eat them.” {14} **“No, Lord,” Peter declared.** “I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure and unclean.” {15} **But the voice spoke again:** “Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean.” {16} The same vision was repeated three times. Then the sheet was suddenly pulled up to heaven. {17} **Peter was very perplexed. What could the vision mean?** Just then the men sent by Cornelius found Simon’s house. Standing outside the gate, {18} they asked if a man named Simon Peter was staying there. {19} Meanwhile, **as Peter was puzzling over the vision, the Holy Spirit said to him,** “Three men have come looking for you. {20} Get up, go downstairs, and go with them without hesitation. Don’t worry, for I have sent them.” {21} So Peter went down and said, “I’m the man you are looking for. Why have you come?” {22} They said, “We were sent by Cornelius, a Roman officer. He is a devout and God-fearing man, well respected by all the Jews. A holy angel instructed him to summon you to his house so that he can hear your message.”*

Peter’s natural senses were suspended. God spoke to him without Peter being aware of anything but the heavenly vision that came to him while he was in the trance. In this trance, God commanded Peter to eat the “*unclean*” animals that were in the sheet. Peter objected, but God prevailed. He finally understood after the vision was repeated three times. Peter then obeyed the voice and went to meet Cornelius’ three servants. They told him of the angel, who instructed Cornelius to send them to summon him.

Peter received the vision of the sheet while in the trance. Then, Peter received a word of knowledge that the three men were coming.

PRINCIPLE 7. A trance is different than a vision, but the Scriptures say we can have visions within a trance.

PRINCIPLE 8. In a trance we can communicate or engage in a conversation with God.

Acts 10 shows us again, that a word of knowledge and a word of wisdom may be received in the trance.

PRINCIPLE 9. We will not always understand the meaning of the trance until God clarifies it (immediately or later).

The Plea from Macedonia – A “Night Vision”

Acts 16:6-10

In the midst of his missionary journey, Paul, along with Timothy and perhaps others who may have traveled with them had their plans changed by the Holy Spirit. **Paul received a plea from a man of Macedonia through a vision during the night.** Here is the biblical account:

Acts 16:6-10 (NKJV)

*“Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. {7} After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. {8} So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. {9} **And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.”** {10} Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.”*

PRINCIPLE 10. The purpose of a vision may be to interrupt our plans and redirect us.

PRINCIPLE 12. God uses visions to show us prayers that He assigns to us to answer.

PRINCIPLE 13. There will be times when the message in a vision is so clear and compelling that we will respond without hesitation, as quickly and directly as we can.

This is a demonstration of our faith working within a strong relationship with God, in which we can recognize His will and respond.

PRINCIPLE 14. God uses visions to call us to a specific ministry in a specific place.

Reassurance Comes Through Visions.

Acts 18:1-11

In this chapter of Acts, it's reported that Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. There he found Aquila and Priscilla, and worked with them in the profession they shared as tentmakers. As usual, Paul spent time in the synagogues "*persuading*" the Jews (who the Emperor Claudius had banished from Rome), along with the Greeks in the city. Silas and Timothy joined him and Paul continued to preach the Gospel.

As in most places Paul went, persecution arose. Acts 9:9-10 tells us that the Lord then appeared to Paul "*in the night by a vision.*" The Bible does not say whether this vision happened in a dream or separately. In Verses 9-10 we learn that God assured Paul that He was with him as were many believers in Corinth. This was a word of knowledge that was meant to reassure Paul.

"Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, **Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; {10} for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.**"

In the vision, Paul also received a word of wisdom directly from the Lord. God said, "**Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent... and no one will attack you to hurt you.**" This was specific instruction for the future. Paul would have understood that he was to keep doing what God called him to Corinth to do. There would be nothing to fear.

PRINCIPLE 15. God uses visions to reassure us in the midst of our fears.

PRINCIPLE 16. God uses visions to confirm, inform and command us. He uses visions to take us beyond our fears and give us the next step to take in our service to Him.

Valid, accurate interpretation of visions can only come from God. He does this in us through the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit from 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. You can also check the validity of an interpretation by testing it against 1 Corinthians, Chapters 12-14. He will enable you to do this through a word of wisdom, word of knowledge or prophecy. Do not expect to do this through natural reasoning. Beware of familiar spirits that will try to fool you.

In the next lesson, we will look into “0962 New Testament Dreams.”