

0962 Biblical Principles from New Testament Dreams

Dreams, like the visions in the previous lesson (0961) 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 dream and holding it in your heart until you have it in your grasp through your obedience. In this lesson we will look at examples of dreams in the New Testament to see what principles they may reveal.

The Christ Child: Revealed in a Dream

Perhaps the most significant dream sequence recorded in the New Testament is found in the annunciation of Christ's conception by an angel to Joseph in a dream. The angel brought God's assurance to Joseph concerning Mary's pregnancy by the Holy Spirit. In doing so, the angel confirmed to Joseph that the great messianic prophecy was about to be fulfilled. Joseph was commanded to care for mother and Child. When he awaked from the dream, he obeyed and began to fulfill the will of God.

Matthew 1:18-25

*"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. {19} Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. {20} **But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. {21} And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." {22} So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: {23} "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." {24} Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, {25} and did not know her till she had***

brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.”

PRINCIPLE 1. Dreams may reveal truths that otherwise would not be seen and understood.

Joseph was given information only God could know about Mary's pregnancy and Jesus' birth.

PRINCIPLE 2. Dreams bring God's assurance and take away the power of fear. (Verse 20)

PRINCIPLE 3. Dreams may provide or confirm prophetic words. (Verses 22-23)

The Scriptures are abundant with prophetic Scriptures regarding the birth of Christ. Here are two:

Isaiah 7:14 (NKJV)

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”

Isaiah 9:6 (NKJV)

*“For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
{7} Of the increase of His government and peace
There will be no end,
Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,
To order it and establish it with judgment and justice
From that time forward, even forever.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”*

PRINCIPLE 4. Dreams may provide direction for personal action.

Joseph understood that he was to take Mary for his wife and care for her and the Baby.

PRINCIPLE 5. Dreams can function just like visions.

Joseph was given information only God could know about Mary's

pregnancy and Jesus' birth. The dream provided a word of wisdom, a word of knowledge and a prophecy. These gave Joseph peace. He was filled with conviction to obey the angel's command and do the will of God.

Divinely Warned in Dreams

Matthew 2:1-16

In Matthew, Chapter 2, we read about two dreams in which the Holy Spirit divinely intervened to warn of danger. In the first dream, the wise men were warned not to return to Herod because the king had determined to kill Jesus by killing all baby boys under two years old who had been born in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16).

Matthew 2:1-12 (NKJV)

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, {2} saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." {3} When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. {4} And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. {5} So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet:

*{6} 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
Are not the least among the rulers of Judah;
For out of you shall come a Ruler
Who will shepherd My people Israel.'*"

*{7} Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. {8} **And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also."** [This was a lie.] {9} When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. {10} When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. {11} And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to*

Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. {12} Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

PRINCIPLE 6. Dreams can be divine warnings from God.

The wise men received a warning, not only to possibly protect them, but also to protect the Christ Child from Herod. The wise men had been given the opportunity to worship Jesus and avoiding the way they came, departed for their own country.

Joseph Warned, Then Sent to Egypt

Matthew 2:13-15

Our second example of being warned in a dream happened in Matthew 2:13-15. As Joseph dreamed, an angel of the Lord warned that Herod would kill all the babies in Bethlehem who were less than two years old. Then, the angel gave Joseph instructions about what to do in response to this threat.

Matthew 2:13-15 (NKJV)

*“Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.” {14} When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, {15} and was there until the death of Herod, **that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, “Out of Egypt I called My Son.”**”*

PRINCIPLE 7. Dreams (just like visions) can go beyond warnings and provide God’s instruction on what to do.

The angel told Joseph to “flee to Egypt” with Mary and Jesus. This was a word of wisdom combined with a word of knowledge that Jesus was in grave danger from Herod.

PRINCIPLE 8. In a dream, God may choose to provide an explanation of why He or His angel gives us specific instructions. (This is His choice and we cannot require it of Him.)

In Matthew 2:15, the explanation for the angel's command to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt was that Jeremiah's prophetic Word would be fulfilled. Then, in Verse 18, Matthew quotes Jeremiah 31:15 as the Scriptural explanation:

Jeremiah 31:15 (NKJV)

"Thus says the Lord:

*"A voice was heard in Ramah,
Lamentation and bitter weeping,
Rachel weeping for her children,
Refusing to be comforted for her children,
Because they are no more."*

PRINCIPLE 9. Dreams given in Scripture will agree with, guard and support the scarlet thread of redemption that weaves its way throughout the Bible. (Also, see PRINCIPLE 10, below. It applies to Joseph's warning to go to Egypt as well as his return to Israel.)

Joseph's Return to Israel

Matthew 2:19-23

Joseph again dreamed and was visited by an angel of the Lord. This happened when King Herod died. The angel told Joseph to return to Israel. The Bible says that Joseph still had fears for his family. God responded to Joseph's fears, by clarifying His instructions. He warned Joseph to change his destination from what would have been Bethlehem and go instead to Nazareth. All of this was part of God's plan.

Matthew 2:19-23 (NKJV)

Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, {20} saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead." {21} Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. {22} But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. {23} And he came and dwelt in a city

called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

PRINCIPLE 10. A dream from God will have a foundation of His love and concern for His children.

This principle is also illustrated in the Joseph's dreams found in Matthew, Chapter 2.

PRINCIPLE 11 (This agrees with PRINCIPLE 9). Dreams may have a connection to fulfilled prophecy. As we saw in Verse 18, God again used a dream to insure that prophecy would be fulfilled.

Joseph heeded the divine warning and went to Nazareth (See John 1:45). Jesus subsequently was raised in Nazareth of Galilee. This would later cause dissension among His enemies.

In Unbelievers' Dreams, They Too, Can Receive God's Message.

Pilate's Wife

God will use dreams for His purposes with whomever He wants. It's not a right or privilege we can claim exclusively as Christians. To do so would be to try to deny that God is completely sovereign.

God may also give people troubling dreams. We may or may not be able to understand the purposes behind them. A biblical example of an unbeliever dreaming is Pilate's wife. Hers was a troubling dream. The Bible is silent about whether the dream came from directly God. However, it does show that regardless of whether God gave the dream, it carried a message that gave Pilate an opportunity to do what was right. He disregarded his wife's plea and the will of God was accomplished through Christ's crucifixion.

Matthew 27:15-19

"Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to releasing to the multitude one prisoner whom they wished. {16} And at that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. {17}

Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" {18} For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy. {19} While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him.""

PRINCIPLE 12. Unpleasant dreams may seem to be a completely natural occurrence, but they may also carry a supernaturally given prophetic element (negative or positive).

PRINCIPLE 13. God may speak to unbelievers in dreams or will often use what they dream for His purposes. In both cases, His will is going to be accomplished.

PRINCIPLE 14. Dreams have power, only to the extent that God allows.

PRINCIPLE 15. Dreams may not persuade the dreamer to do what's right, but they have no power to cancel God's will.

We will be looking into the dreams of evil kings in the Book of Daniel. However, before we do this, we will go to a lesson titled, "0963 Old Testament Visions." Then, we will complete our series of four lessons with "0964 Old Testament Dreams and Visions from the Book of Daniel."

Here is an overview of the four part series titles.

0961 New Testament Visions

0962 New Testament Dreams

0963 Old Testament Visions

0964 Old Testament Dreams and Visions from the Book of Daniel

Now, let's move ahead to the next lesson, "0963 Old Testament Visions."