

WHEN VISION COMES



***Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.
For behold, darkness shall cover the earth and thick darkness the peoples;
But the Lord will arise upon you and his glory will be seen upon you.
And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.***

Isaiah 60:1-3

Vision happens when God opens somebody's eyes and enables them to see something that the natural eye is not capable of seeing....

His Glory.

Jacob

Jacob falls asleep with his head upon that stone and in his dream, he sees this stairway resting upon the earth and extending all the way up to heaven, to another world, and the Angels of God are ascending and descending upon this stairway. And at the top of the stairway stands the God of Israel himself in glory.



And when Jacob wakes up in the morning, he knows that this was not just another dream. But that night he had been in the presence of the living God, and that God had revealed something to him, spoken to him, and he made a covenant with God that affected the rest of his life.

Cornelius

Cornelius, a gentile, a professional soldier is praying at 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon, the hour of prayer. And while he's praying, suddenly an angel appears to him and says to him,

“Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter.”

Acts 10:4b-5



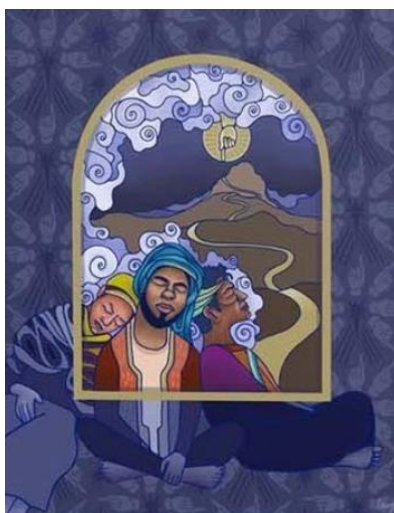
And that vision which came to Cornelius that afternoon transformed his life. It was the turning point. It was the means by which Cornelius also found his way to Jacob's stairway..... For this link between earth and heaven, on which the angels of God ascend and descend to Jesus.

Magi

The wise men, magi. They were of a priestly class in ancient Persia... Iran. And it was customary for them to delve into the occult, into astrology, into all kinds of spirit territory that is out of bounds for any Jew or any Christian. But this was all they knew and as these men looked up and saw the sky and beheld that star they saw something nobody else did.

They were given vision.

And this vision that came to these magi indicated that the stairway of Jacob had now come to rest upon the earth, in the person of a newborn child, Israel's king....



...And they pursued the vision.

Notice that in every case vision came to ordinary people. There was nothing exceptional about any of those men.

Jacob had his vision at a time when he was extremely selfish and crafty. He had just cheated his brother out of the blessing of the father and long before that he had cheated him out of his birthright and he was running to keep from getting killed by Essau. But he got a vision.

Cornelius made his living by walking around with a sword strapped to his belt.

These wise men didn't know any better than to delve in and play around with dark spiritual fire, but they likewise received vision that brought them to Jacob's Stairway.

Now, if they were not in any way exceptional, just ordinary people like ourselves, how is it that they received vision when so many others were bypassed? What was it that God saw when he looked into their hearts that encouraged him to visit these people with life?

Thinking especially now about the wise men, what was it that these men had about them that drew the light to them and enabled them to follow the light onto the fulfillment of the vision?

We need to know, because we need to have more vision than we have now ourselves.

We need to see Jacob's Stairway also.

We can't go by what people tell us.
We can't go by what we read in books.
We have to see for ourselves who this Jesus is.

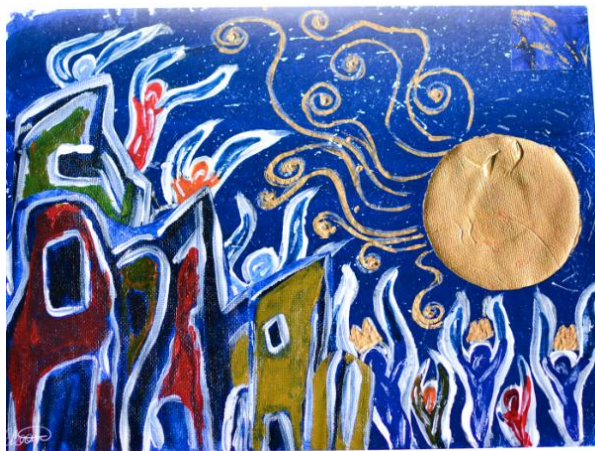
And find out for sure whether Jesus is in fact Jacob's Stairway.

So we can receive vision.

We can be sure that God will give to us the same light that God gave to them if we will learn three lessons from these wise men.

1. Vision comes to those who are prepared to let their lives become disrupted by the glory of God.
2. Vision comes to those who are willing to seek.
3. Vision comes to those who really worship.

Vision comes to those who are prepared to be disrupted by the Glory of God.



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, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." (Matthew 2:1-2)

These men are in Jerusalem trying to find out what the story is about this, they'd already traveled hundreds of miles. Tremendous disruption.

**Their lives have been really disrupted.
And they were willing to be disrupted.**

Well, there were other wise men in Persia who knew just as much about the stars as these men did. But the difference is that these men, in their hearts, were prepared when they saw light...

....to follow that light
....to move in that light....

....even if it messes up their routine.

And it did mess up their routine. They left their homes, their work, their homeland and traveled for days and days and days westward, looking for this child.

What a wonderful, awesome thing that they held loosely enough....

.....to their routine
.....to their lifestyle
.....to their possessions

....so that they could turn and go on a new path as soon as the light comes to rest upon that path.



Now all through Scripture and all through the history of the Kingdom of God, we see this principle operating....

Vision comes to those who are willing to be disrupted by light from God.

***Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.***

That means disruption.

It means get out.

You can't sit around in those shadows anymore when the light has come to you, you have to get up and speak forth that light and live forth the light that has come.

The light came to Cornelius *and he moved with it.*

The light came to Jacob *and he began to bend his stiff neck.*

The light came to these wise men *and they followed this light.*

What will it be for us this Christmas? Is it going to be another routine Christmas, the same Christmas tree? We pull it out of the attic or buy a new one, same lights, same location, same relatives, same menu, everything the same. Now, there's nothing wrong with that. That can be very beautiful.

But are we willing in the midst of all these things which are the same year after year, to allow for change?

Are we prepared to open our hearts and bend them toward the light that comes to us?

Are we willing to change our ways, to change our thinking?

Are we willing to yield to the life that's trying to bring us closer to Jacob's Stairway, so we can really see and be changed by this vision?

Suppose, the Spirit of the Lord would have us set another place or two at the table on Christmas, inviting so and so, or suppose the Spirit would like us to have dinner 2 hours later so...so and so could come, or maybe we could choose to fellowship?

Vision comes to those who seek.

The Magi not only got the vision that told them about this child but now they had to pursue the fulfillment of the vision and pressed their search until it literally became prayer.

"Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: "And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.""

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

Matthew 2:2-10

They knew that they were on to something, they had received some light from this star, but it wasn't clear enough. Like us, "I see, but I need a clearer vision. I see men, but they look like trees walking."

And so they kept pressing their search. They asked questions. They get to Jerusalem, the capital city, the logical place. "Where is this king?" Nobody knows. They go to Herod's palace, that would be a logical place. "Was there a baby born here?" Nobody knows. They call out the theologians, the Bible scholars. They head towards Bethlehem. And now the star begins to guide them again and finally they find this child.



It's always this way in the Kingdom of God, vision is always progressive. If I use the light I have, I get more light. If I pursue the goal that God has set before me, then the goal becomes clearer. But I have to press. God doesn't just give this to us on a silver platter. He holds out something. Now we go for it. And as we do, it becomes brighter.

And this is especially true of our search to behold Jesus, to see him. To ask that God open our eyes and truly enable us to see who he is. This means that we have to back up our asking with a constant pursuit. Not just 20 minutes a day on our knees praying, or walking back and forth praying in the spirit every day, asking for more light. That's great, but it has to be more than that.

It's got to be a continuous pursuit, all the time in our daily living, bringing our minds back around every time they wander. Lord, the one thing I want is to know Jesus. I want to hear him speak. I want to know him in the power of his resurrection, and in the fellowship of his suffering, and become like him in his death. I want to know him so well that I'm willing and able to die for him!

Vision comes to those who really worship

When these men found the child, the first thing they did was prostrate themselves, they flattened their bodies out in front of this little baby, in that manger. And then they opened their bags and pulled out their treasure, the best, the most expensive treasures they had.

And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.
(Matthew 2:11)

They worshipped him with their hearts.

They offered themselves as a living sacrifice, their very bodies.

Falling down did for this child and then they also worshiped him with their substance.

This is the common denominator of every human being that ever walked this earth that ever has vision.

They worship God with their heart and with their substance.

Cornelius feared God, gave alms liberally, and prayed to God all the time.

Jacob, when he had that vision, poured oil over the stone where he had been lying, worshipped and committed himself to ten percent of all he had from there on through.

The Wise Men fell down in front of the child with their bodies and then pulled out their treasure.

Now, are we willing to do these two things?

Are we willing to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, to prostrate ourselves in worship?

Are we willing also to worship him with our substance?

The Lord will show us where he wants us to put our gold and frankincense and myrrh. All we have to do is to pour out the gold, the frankincense, and myrrh before God, He'll show us where to put it. He'll show us.

***Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.***

Vision

Jacob stairway

Jacob's stairway is still here.

The Angels of God ascend and descend upon it.

The father stands above it, in another world.

But in order to behold this stairway, in order to see Jesus for who he is, and to be able to hear Him speak we must have vision. Fresh vision, not last year's vision, today's vision.

The Lord and giver of vision is in your midst. God the Holy Spirit is closer to you now than your breath. And he will indeed open up your eyes, enable you to see, and to be changed by what you see.

Three questions.

Are you right now, prepared to allow our life to be disrupted in whatever way God should choose?

Are you willing to really seek Him and to keep seeking until your whole life becomes prayer?

Are you willing to worship, with your body presented as a living sacrifice, and your treasure offered in thanksgiving to him?



Prayer: Lord, bring us to the place where we see Jacob's Stairway, where we experience your presence in a very real way, where your light, your glory shines strongly upon us. When vision comes may we willingly allow the vision to disrupt our lives. May we keep pursuing it, pressing towards it for most of the moments of our lives. And Lord, may we offer ourselves, our time, our things, all we have in thanksgiving to you. Help us to continue to arise and shine as you so deserve when vision comes. Amen.

Message: Richard E. Bieber Christmas 1983 aka Jacob's Stairway

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