

Need a Vision?

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I am going to expand a devotional I gave on the mission trip to a sermon I give to you. It will be a part of tying you, me, and the mission trip together.

Muslims are being converted in many, many circumstances by dreams and visions of Jesus. For example, "On the night of Lailatur Qodar, when Muslims around the world make individualized prayers to Allah, Dini experienced a vision of Jesus Christ, who appeared before her and told her to follow him. Dini was hesitant. As a Muslim, she realized that following Christ would "make her a Christian." (Lausanne World Pulses) She overcame her fear and became a follower of Jesus. (In the last days, says Joel 2, God will pour out his Spirit and the old shall dream dreams and the young shall have visions.)

So my question, actually my two questions, are what do they do (visions) and how do you get one? They convert is one answer, as we have just seen. That's what they do. But also they communicate, guide, encourage or warn (think of Peter having a vision related to Cornelius and going to the Gentiles), ... and they have staying power. In Chomp n' Chat last week we had someone remember in great detail a vision they had as a child. Years and years later, remembered and still influencing.

And, should you want a vision ... how do you get one? You can get most anything on Amazon. Can you get one there? At a retreat center? With a little peyote? In San Antonio, on their famous river walk, thousands of grackles would descend at certain times of the year, inhabit all the tree limbs, window shelves, restaurant awning poles. Walking beneath these presented a nasty hazard. Some wise guy handed out painters' hats with a bullseye on top. If you got hit by a bird dropping, in the bullseye, you got a free drink. Is there someplace you go, something you do to get hit by a vision?

I can tell you where to go and how to get one. The Bible. John got one and he put it down so we can read it and have that vision too. Mi casa su casa. John said, Mi Vision, your vision. It's recorded so you and I can have the vision. It may not be like being in a trance and getting a vision. But it could be. It could be.

Let me tell you why I went to the vision given to John in Revelation 1 for a devotional for a mission trip to Muslim background ministry in Germany. Not only was there the link between Muslims having visions leading to conversions and this being a vision. There was more. Actually, three reasons more. First, John got this vision in Patmos. That's where he was a refugee. In a place of dislocation (like a dislocated shoulder but for your life), he got a vision – for him, for others (for us). He knew displacement and disruption. Patmos is code for a difficult place. He's in a difficult place, refugees are in a difficult place, and many times you and I are in a difficult place. Everyone likes the idea of living a long life but not of growing old. Growing old puts you in a difficult place. Cancer puts you in a difficult place. Losing a spouse puts you in a difficult place. Scant finances put you in a difficult place. You can see, I hope, why it seemed an appropriate place to go. His vision, become ours, could be very helpful.

Second, John wrote to a persecuted church. Believers on the run leaving all behind. Believers imprisoned. Believers chased down and killed. History records them being crucified, being made into human tiki torches, being eaten by lions. What do you say to people in these situations? Ahh, what did Jesus say? Don't you want to know? These believers have been hunted. What do we say? Pastor Sargeez, an Iranian, was a pastor in Tehran. Not a firebrand, a pastor. A Presbyterian pastor at that – how menacing could he have possibly been? Hardly. But he was sentenced to 14 years in prison, for being a Christian. What do we say to him and his family?

Third, John was in a holding pattern. You've probably experienced it, if you have flown, the jet must circle for some reason

like bad weather, and you're in a holding pattern. It means you are waiting, and you'd rather not be waiting. John, and all the believers, were waiting for Jesus to come again to end all the calamity and make everything beautiful and good. They were waiting for the persecution to end. What are you waiting for – an end to arthritis? An end to inflammatory rhetoric? An end to loneliness?

Pastor Sargeez fled with his wife and two daughters. Wouldn't you have done the same? Sargeez was told there were Persians in Germany, some Christians who needed a shepherd (you know what they call pastors in Germany? German Shepherds.) Some Muslims needed Christ. All of them refugees who needed help in their like displacement and the hardships of being an alien, of being alienated. So he's there, doing just that. But it has been nine years of a holding pattern and he still has not gotten a German passport. Could he use a vision?

I'm going to read this now and as it comes to you ask, what might this do for Sargeez, and those like him, and what might this do for you?

The vision is bookended by authority statements, power statements of Christ – him who was and is and is to come; him who is the alpha and omega (we'd say him who is from A to Z). Absorb the bookend statements and now, hear God's word.

Pray / read

I'm going to make four applicational observations. There's so much that could be said but just for now, these four. First, see Jesus' face and feet. Bright up here and burnished down there. Do they need, do you need a night light or a guiding light or a cut-through-it-all-and-see-the-truth light? Look at Jesus' face.

Now look at his feet. Feet burnished, meaning they've been in the fire, even hell-fire. Is any feeling the heat? Experiencing hell? He's been there and his feet show he's with you in the furnace. The fire has fired them, not melted them. Hold on to his feet, I say.

Second, see his hands. We sing he's got the whole world in his hands. Those are big hands. The world is 25,000 miles in circumference. Big. Stars are bigger. Jesus has not one but seven of them in his hands. He's got really big hands. Seven means complete or total. Ie, Jesus has all worlds, all cosmoses, ... all places in his hands. He's got your place.

And, given that stars in the ancient world also had to do with time, as in Moonday Monday, Sun Day Sunday, Saturn Day Saturday (and in Spanish, Viernes venus day, miercoles mercury)... then he not only has all places but all times in his hands. The one who was, is, and forever shall be has in his hands all times, including your times, be they high or low. Look at his hands.

Third, where is Jesus? Among the lampstands. Seven, again, means complete or total. His among all the lampstands which are Christians and their churches. This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. So he is with us, among us. He is not out there but right here. The cosmic Christ is the close Christ. Whatever your straits, O Christian, he is with you.

This book of Revelation, and this chapter one of Revelation, the text says this, is a revelation by Jesus Christ of Jesus Christ. Jesus gives us Jesus. Whatever our need or desire Jesus gives us Jesus. Look at him and ... as the song goes, the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the vision of his glory and grace.

Jesus, whoever is dislocated, waiting, needy ... look at Jesus.

*If you would like to talk with someone about this message
or your spiritual life, or to have someone pray with you,
the pastors and elders of the church would welcome your call.
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