

## TOWARDS AN ADVENTIST THEOLOGY OF DREAMS AND VISIONS WITH MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

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### 1. Introduction

Sung Ik Kim wrote his PhD dissertation on the missiological implications of the Book of Daniel.<sup>1</sup> In an article based on his research he wrote:

Although dreams and visions are one of the dominant mediums of *missio Dei* (God's Mission) in the Bible, it is unusual to find Christians who pay much attention to dreams and visions in the Western Christian world today. The subject is not even treated seriously in academic theological circles in spite of being evident in Scripture that God uses supernatural dreams and visions to reach and save unreached people.<sup>2</sup>

I also have noticed in my research and interaction with Sabbath School members when I present on dreams that Adventists, even those who have had what they believe is a God-given dream, are extremely reluctant to share with other members of the body of Christ for fear of being laughed at or thought to be slightly crazy. For example, if I stood here today and said, "last night God spoke to me in a dream," many of you would begin to smirk and question my academic grounding. So we have skepticism by many Western theologians towards God speaking and revealing himself to people today through dreams and visions during the very time in history when God is sending hundreds and thousands of dreams and visions to Muslims that result in many of them beginning a journey of faith and commitment to Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sung Ik Kim, "Proclamation in Cross-Cultural Context: Missiological Implications of the Book of Daniel" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Sung Ik Kim, "Missiological Implications of Nebuchadnezzar's Dreams," *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 12.2 (2012): 110.

<sup>3</sup> Tom Doyle, *Dreams and Visions: Is Jesus Awakening the Muslim World?* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2012); Adam Harwood, "Does God Speak Today through Visions and

In response to this situation, I offer this paper to begin and encourage dialogue on an Adventist theology of dreams and visions. The paper will have five sections: Dreams and Visions in the Old Testament, New Testament, and Writing of Ellen G. White; the Purpose of God-Given Dreams and Visions; Warnings about Dreams and Visions Not Inspired by God; Missiological Implications of Dreams and Visions among Muslims; and Practical Suggestions.

## 2. Definitions

*Webster's New World Dictionary* defines a dream as "a sequence of sensations, images, thoughts, etc. passing through a sleeping person's mind."<sup>4</sup> A vision is defined as "something supposedly seen by other than normal sight; something perceived in a dream, trance, etc. or supernaturally revealed, as to a prophet."<sup>5</sup> Dreams are usually thought of as taking place while a person sleeps while a vision could take place while a person is awake. However, some visions in Scripture specifically state that they took place in the night.<sup>6</sup>

## 3. Dreams and Visions in the Old Testament, New Testament, and the Writings of Ellen G. White

### 3.1. Dreams and Visions in the OT

Dreams and visions play a prominent role in the OT, perhaps because so much of the OT is narrative, in contrast to the NT where most of the

Dreams?" 2015, <http://www.bhacademicblog.com/does-god-speak-today-through-visions-and-dreams/>; J. Dudley Woodberry, ed., *From Seed to Fruit: Global Trends, Fruitful Practices, and Emerging Issues among Muslims*, 2nd ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2011); Nabeel Qureshi, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus: A Devout Muslim Encounters Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016); Randal Scott, "Evangelism and Dreams: Foundational Presuppositions to Interpret God-Given Dreams of the Unreached," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 44.2 (2008): 176–184.

<sup>4</sup> *Webster's New World Dictionary*, 2nd college ed., s.v. "dream."

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, s.v. "vision."

<sup>6</sup> Scott Breslin and Mike Jones, *Understanding Dreams from God* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2004), 13.

material is of a teaching nature.<sup>7</sup> Notice some of the more prominent narratives where dreams and visions play such an important role:

1. Abimelech warned not to touch Abraham's wife (Gen 20:1–7).
2. Jacob instructed on sheep mating techniques (Gen 31:10–12).
3. Laban warned not to harm Jacob (Gen 31:24, 29).
4. Joseph given information about his future—his family would bow before him (Gen 37:5–11).
5. Joseph interprets two prisoner's dreams (Gen 40:5–23).
6. Joseph interprets Pharaoh's two dreams (Gen 41:1–36).
7. Gideon is encouraged by overhearing a Midianite's dream (Judg 7:9–15).
8. Solomon is asked by God in a dream what he desires for his kingdom (1 Kgs 3:5–14).
9. Nebuchadnezzar is given information about the future of the world empires (Dan 2:1–45).
10. Nebuchadnezzar is warned about his pride in a dream of a fallen tree (Dan 4:4–33).

### 3.2. Dreams and Visions in the NT

The NT has fewer narratives concerning dreams and visions, but the purpose and types remain constant with OT narratives. Notice the most prominent ones:

1. Joseph is encouraged to marry his pregnant fiancée (Matt 1:18–25).
2. The wise men are warned not to return home through Jerusalem (Matt 2:9–12).
3. Joseph is warned to flee to Egypt to escape the anger and wrath of Herod (Matt 2:13, 14).
4. Joseph is given directions when to return home with Mary and Jesus (Matt 2:19–23).
5. Pilate's wife had a nightmare and warned Pilate not to harm an innocent man (Matt 27:19).
6. Saul, the killer of Christians, makes a u-turn in his life after his vision (Acts 9:1–9).
7. Ananias is instructed through a vision to meet killer Saul (Acts 9:10–19).

<sup>7</sup> Flanvis Johnson, "Towards a Biblical Theology of Dreams," 2016, <https://soundfaith.com/sermons/19616-towards-a-biblical-theology-of-dreams>.

8. Cornelius is told in a vision to send some men to Joppa (Acts 10:1–8).
9. Peter has a vision that instructs him that people are not unclean (Acts 10:9–16).
10. Paul is told through a vision where to minister next (Acts 16:9, 10).

### 3.3. Dreams and Visions in the Writings of Ellen G. White

Seventh-day Adventists have readily accepted that White received instructions and messages from God through visions and dreams. In addition to the references to how God gave her warnings and councils for the young Adventist Church she has also listed a few principles that should guide other people in deciding whether or not a dream or vision is from God.

#### *3.3.1. Guiding Principles*

In the second volume of *Selected Messages*, White indicates that God-given dreams are used by God as a medium of communication<sup>8</sup> and in the first volume of *Testimonies for the Church*, she says that the meaning and message of dreams are “proofs of their genuineness.”<sup>9</sup> However, many dreams are from natural causes and have nothing to do with a message from God.<sup>10</sup> There are also dreams and visions that are inspired by Satan<sup>11</sup> that need to be tested by the teachings and principles of God’s Word. If any message that comes through a dream or a vision opposes anything in God’s Word, it is not a God-given dream or vision.<sup>12</sup>

I would say to our dear brethren who have been so eager to accept everything that came in the form of visions and dreams, Beware that you be not ensnared. Read the warnings that have been given by the world’s Redeemer to His disciples to be given again by them to the world. The Word of God is solid rock, and we may plant our feet securely upon it.... Take heed ... for delusions and deceptions will come ... as we near the end.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1958), 683.

<sup>9</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 1:570.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:569.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 2:98.

<sup>13</sup> Ellen G. White, Manuscript 27, 1894, quoted in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. Francis D. Nichol, rev. ed (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 1980), 7:952.

### 3.3.2. Narratives

White also shares several narratives that illustrate that God sends dreams and visions to encourage and guide his people. John Huss, when imprisoned, had a dream that encouraged him that even if his work was destroyed there would be many more people that would lift up the name of Jesus.<sup>14</sup> William Miller received a dream that showed him that many who professed to follow the truth were in danger of being lost—that they only looked like genuine believers.<sup>15</sup> John Matteson had a dream that showed that in spite of the attempts of those opposed to the work of James and Ellen White that God would help them withstand the attacks, and in the end they would even give a stronger witness to the truth.<sup>16</sup> J. N. Loughborough, when faced with a decision, prayed and asked God for guidance. In response God sent him a dream showing him what to do in that situation.<sup>17</sup>

The evidence from the OT, NT, and from the writings of White indicates that God guides and directs through dreams and visions; yet, many Christians, especially Westerners, are skeptical of people who even talk about God giving them a dream. It seems that the effects of the Enlightenment, a strong belief in the scientific method, and a struggle to accept personal experience as a valid way through which God reveals himself to people today leave some Western Christians with a very deistic perspective of God—they believe God is there but that he is distant and does not interact with his creation.

### 3.4. Summary of Principles from Dreams and Visions in the OT, NT, and Writings of Ellen G. White

There are several important principles in the dream and vision narratives in Scripture and in what White has to say on this topic:

1. God speaks to people in the faith community—Jacob, Joseph, Solomon, Joseph, Ananias, and Paul.
2. God also speaks to people outside the faith community—Abimelech, Pharaoh, the Midianite soldier, Nebuchadnezzar, Pilate's wife, and Saul the persecutor of Christians.

<sup>14</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 108.

<sup>15</sup> Ellen G. White, *Early Writings of Ellen G. White* (Washington DC: Review & Herald, 1945), 81–83.

<sup>16</sup> White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:597–98.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:601–2.

3. God sends dreams and visions to important heads of state to guide their nations and to keep them from going in the wrong direction—Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar.
4. God even sends dreams and visions to those who hunt down and kill God’s people—Saul.
5. The meaning and message of dreams and visions indicate if they are genuine or not.
6. Dreams can have several sources: natural causes, Satan, and God.
7. *Most important:* all dreams and visions need to be tested by the Word of God.

#### 4. Purpose of God-Given Dreams and Visions

Dreams and visions in the Bible were two ways God’s prophets received God’s messages for his people. “And the Lord said to them, ‘Now listen to what I say: If there were a prophet among you, I the Lord, would reveal myself in visions, I would speak to them in dreams’” (Num 12:6).

The purpose of this paper, however, is not to discuss the relationship of dreams and visions as a medium God used to communicate his messages to his prophets. Rather, the focus is on the current context where God is sending dreams and visions to people who are often antagonistic towards the Word of God and the Christian faith. One OT passage lists four reasons why God sends dreams and visions to people other than prophets. It often is not wise to quote Elihu from the Book of Job to help establish a theology of any kind; however, in this case the scriptural evidence from other passages supports what he says.

For God speaks again and again, though people do not recognize it. He speaks in dreams, in visions of the night, when deep sleep fall on people as they lie in their beds. He whispers in their ears and terrifies them with warnings. He makes them turn from doing wrong; he keeps them from pride. He protects them from the grave, from crossing over the river of death (Job 33:14–18, NLT, emphasis mine).

God gives dreams and visions in order to (a) help people turn from doing wrong, (b) keep people from pride, (c) protect people from the grave (points them in the right direction), and (d) protect people from death. Most of the dreams in both the OT and NT fulfill one or more of these purposes. Notice the biblical examples:

1. *Help people turn from doing wrong:* King Abimelech’s dream in Gen 20, Saul’s vision on the Damascus road in Acts 9:1–9, and Laban’s dream warning him not to harm Jacob in Gen 31:29.

2. *Keep people from pride*: Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Dan 4:10–18.
3. *Protect people from the grave (point people in the right direction)*: Two visions given to Cornelius and Peter in Acts 10:1–8.
4. *Protect people from death*: Pharaoh's dream about the coming famine in Gen 41:14–24 and the magi's and Joseph's dreams that saved Jesus's life in Matt 2:1–18.

#### 4.1. Dream Narratives in Scripture

*The New International Bible Concordance* lists 108 references to dreams. This section will only look at the narratives and not individual references to dreams. Joseph and Daniel are the two Bible figures who by far have the most references, with Joseph being associated with twenty-two of those references and Daniel having a connection with an additional twenty-six.<sup>18</sup> Notice the purpose for the following narratives:

Text	Story	Purpose
Gen 20:3, 6	Abimelech takes Sarah	Guidance and warning not to sin
Gen 28:12	Jacob and the stairway to heaven	Promise of protection and blessing
Gen 31:10, 11, 34	Jacob cheated by Laban	Encouragement and warning
Gen 37	Joseph's two dreams	Foretelling the future
Gen 40	Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker	Foretelling the future
Gen 41	Pharaoh's dream of cows and grain	Foretelling and warning of famine
Judg 7:13, 15	Midianite soldier's dream	Encouragement to Gideon
Dan 2	Nebuchadnezzar's image	Foretelling the future
Dan 4	Nebuchadnezzar's tree	Warning against pride
Dan 7	Four beasts	Foretelling the future
Matt 1:20	Joseph engagement to Mary	Encouragement to marry Mary
Matt 2:12	Wise men told to return home	Guidance and warning not to return to Herod

<sup>18</sup> Edward W. Goodrick and John R. Kohlenberger III, *The NIV Complete Concordance: The Complete English Concordance to the New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 226.

Matt 2:13	Joseph told to flee to Egypt	Guidance and warning about Herod intention
Matt 2:19	Joseph instructed to return home	Guidance
Matt 2:22	Joseph warned to leave Galilee	Guidance
Matt 27:19	Pilate's wife warns Pilate	Guidance

Table 1. *Dream Narratives in Scripture*

It is interesting to note that of the sixteen references listed above, most of them have an element of guidance where God showed people what to do or how to respond to local situations. Eleven of the sixteen God-given dream stories consisted of information that had only local significance and meaning and did not have any universal application. Perhaps these are two principles to be learned from the God-given dream stories—listen to what God is saying to you personally, but do not automatically think that the message has universal application.

#### 4.2. Vision Narratives in Scripture

In addition to dreams, *The New International Bible Concordance* lists 106 references to visions.<sup>19</sup> Again, I will only make reference in this paper to the narrative stories. It is interesting to note that while Joseph and Daniel had the most references to *dreams*, only Daniel also had *visions* and leads all other Bible characters in the number of visions mentioned in connection with his life and work—twenty-six. The apostle Paul had the second largest number of visions with six references.

Text	Story	Purpose
Gen 15:1	Abram promised protection and a heir	Encouragement and guidance
Gen 46:2	Jacob encouraged to go to Egypt	Encouragement and foretelling the future
1 Sam 3:15	Samuel given a message for Eli	Warning of coming destruction to Eli's sons
Isa 1:1; 21:2; 22:1	Isaiah received messages through visions	Warning and guidance of Israel and Judah
Ezek 8:4	Ezekiel shown the detestable sins of Judah	Warning of destruction to come

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 979–80.



Ezek 11:24	Ezekiel told that Israel would return	Warning and encouragement for exiled Israel
Ezek 43:3	Ezekiel sees the Lord's glory return	Encouragement for God's remnant
Dan 2:19, 45	Meaning of the image revealed	Encouragement & guidance
Dan 7:2, 7, 13	Vision of the four beasts & the Son of Man	Foretelling the future
Dan 8:1, 2, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 26, 27	Vision of the ram and goat, the 2,300 evenings and mornings & the explanation	Foretelling the future to give guidance to God's people
Dan 9:21, 23, 24	Meaning of vision of Dan 8 revealed	Foretelling future events
Dan 10 and 11	Vision of the kings of the south and north	Foretelling future events
Obad 1:1	Edom's destruction foretold	Foretelling coming destruction
Mic 1:1	Visions of Samaria and Jerusalem	Warning of coming destruction
Nah 1:1	Nahum's visions	Warnings for Nineveh
Zech 1:8	Zechariah's visions	Encouraged people to continue rebuilding the temple in the face of opposition
Luke 1:22	Zachariah's vision about his son, John	Foretelling John's birth
Acts 9:10, 12	Ananias and Saul have a vision	Guidance and direction for Ananias and Saul
Acts 10:3, 17, 19; 11:5	Peter and Cornelius receive guidance through separate visions	Guidance and direction for Cornelius and Peter
Acts 16:9, 10	Paul receives a call to go to Macedonia	Guidance in ministry
Acts 18:9	Paul encouraged to speak out in Corinth	Encouragement to be bold in witness
Rev 9:17	John receives information about the future	Foretelling future events

*Table 2. Vision Narratives in Scripture*

Visions seem to be more closely associated with the prophetic function of giving warnings and foretelling future events. Only the two dreams in Dan 2

and 7 had a universal application, but when God wanted to share the meaning of the dreams in those chapters, he gave Daniel a vision to explain their meaning. Again, many of the vision narratives listed above were only for personal guidance for a local situation and did not have universal application.

### 4.3. Summary of Purposes of Dreams and Visions

Several purposes are suggested by the dream and vision narratives in Scripture: (a) they help people turn from doing wrong, (b) they keep people from pride, (c) they protect people from the grave by pointing them in the right direction, (d) they protect people from death, and (e) most visions and dreams have local and personal, not universal, application. In addition, dreams and visions are ways God has communicated his messages to his prophets, showing them future events; however, this is not the focus of this paper.

## 5. Warnings about Dreams and Visions Not Inspired by God

The Bible also has quite a bit to say about dreams and visions that do not have their source in God. Notice this long passage in Jer 23.

I have not sent these prophets, yet they run around claiming to speak for me. I have given them no message, yet they go on prophesying. If they had stood before me and listened to me, they would have spoken my words, and they would have turned my people from their evil ways and deeds....

I have heard these prophets say, "Listen to the dream I had from God last night." And then they proceed to tell lies in my name. How long will this go on? If they are prophets, they are prophets of deceit, inventing everything they say. By telling these false dreams they are trying to get my people to forget me, just as their ancestors did by worshipping the idols of Baal.

Let these false prophets tell their dreams, but let my true messengers faithfully proclaim my every word. There is a difference between straw and grain....

Therefore, says the Lord, "I am against these prophets who steal messages from each other and claim they are from me. I am against these smooth-tongued prophets who say, 'This prophecy is from the Lord!' I am against these false prophets. Their imaginary dreams are flagrant lies that lead my people into sin. I did not send or appoint them, and they have no message at all for my people. I the Lord have spoken!" (Jer 23:21, 22, 25–28, 30–32)

It is clear that there are both dreams from God and dreams from natural and satanic sources. The principles listed above should give guidance to the Adventist Church in discerning the true from the false. Other biblical texts further reinforce the concept that there is a lot of deception out there among those who have dreams and are interested in knowing their meanings.

This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel says, "Do not let your prophets and fortune-tellers who are with you in the land of Babylon trick you. Do not listen to their dreams, because they are telling you lies in my name. I have not sent them," says the Lord. (Jer 29:8, 9)

Household gods give worthless advice, fortune-tellers predict only lies, and interpreters of dreams pronounce falsehoods that give no comfort. So my people are wandering like lost sheep, they are attacked because they have no shepherd. (Zech 10:2)

Suppose there are prophets among you or those who dream dreams about the future, and they promise you signs and miracles, and the predicted signs or miracles occur. If they then say, "Come, let us worship other gods"—gods you have not known before—do not listen to them. The Lord your God is testing you to see if you truly 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 visionaries who try to lead you astray must be put to death, for they encourage rebellion against the Lord your God, who redeemed you from slavery and brought you out of the land of Egypt. Since they try to lead you astray from the way the Lord your God commanded you to live, you must put them to death. In this way you will purge the evil from among you." (Deut 13:1–5)

We may not have modern-day false prophets walking the streets claiming to have received a dream from God to guide a nation or individuals, but there are plenty of false sources out there seeking to lead people astray. I looked at Amazon.com and found many authors willing to guide in interpreting a person's dreams. Notice the titles of just three offerings: *The Dreamer's Dictionary: From A to Z ... 3,000 Magical Mirrors to Reveal the Meaning of Your Dreams*, *Llewellyn's Complete Dictionary of Dreams: Over 1,000 Dream Symbols and Their Universal Meanings*, and *12,000 Dreams Interpreted: A New Edition for the 21st Century*.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Stearn Robinson and Tom Gorbett, *The Dreamer's Dictionary: From A to Z ... 3,000 Magical Mirrors to Reveal the Meaning of Your Dreams* (New York: Grand Central, 1974); Michael Lennox, *Llewellyn's Complete Dictionary of Dreams: Over 1,000 Dream Symbols and Their Universal Meanings* (Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn, 2015); Gustavus Hindman Miller, Linda Shields, and Lenore Skomal, *12,000 Dreams Interpreted: A New Edition for the 21st Century* (New York: Sterling, 2011).

Muslim also have all types of websites where they can have their dreams interpreted. I again list only three of them: (a) [www.edreaminterpretation.org/islamic-dream-interpretation](http://www.edreaminterpretation.org/islamic-dream-interpretation), (b) [www.myislamicdream.com/](http://www.myislamicdream.com/), and (c) [www.dreamislamic.org/](http://www.dreamislamic.org/). Movies and TV are filled with plots and stories about dreams and visions that create a curiosity and interest in this topic, while 1-900 psychics are willing to take your money as they give their interpretation of your dreams. The message from all this is “be warned.” There are both God-given dreams and dreams that are inspired by Satan for the great controversy is played out in every area of life including a person’s dreams.

## 6. Missiological Implications of Current Dreams and Visions among Muslims

Fortunately, the Seventh-day Adventist Church does not have to contend with the cessationist perspective that some denominations struggle with. White clearly demonstrated that God continued to send dreams, visions, healings, and other miraculous gifts long after the apostolic era. Instead, some in our church struggles with skepticism towards experience, some have Enlightenment and modern rationalistic thinking and a deistic perspective when it comes to things like dreams and visions. Yet, God continues to send dreams and visions to Muslims in great numbers. Randal Scott estimates that at least 50 percent of the Muslim background believers he met had received a God-given dream as part of their journey to faith in Jesus Christ.<sup>21</sup>

Then there is the passage in Acts 2:17, 18 that says, “In the last days, God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on my servants—men and women alike—and they will prophesy.’” If the last days started when Peter uttered these words, then we are in the last of the last days.<sup>22</sup> So there is strong contextual support—God is speaking to Muslims through dreams and visions and there is strong biblical support for what God is doing. The question that we as Adventists face is what are we doing to prepare our people to know how to interact and utilize what God is doing in the Muslim world in this area? Are we training our members so they know how to interact with Muslims who have had a dream of a man in white who tells them that he is “the way, the truth, and the light?” Do our members know what topics are

<sup>21</sup> Scott, “Evangelism and Dreams,” 176.

<sup>22</sup> Johnson, “Biblical Theology of Dreams.”

initially non-controversial and what topics to talk about with Muslims after relationships are established and the person's faith in Christ is growing?

## 7. Practical Suggestions

Scott found in working with Muslims in the Middle East that many of them readily talked with him about the spiritual dreams they had and their desire to know what God was saying to them through their dreams. Over the years, he realized that many of those who had a God-given dream about Jesus went through a three-phase process: (1) a mystery phase, (2) a meaning phase, and (3) a response phase.<sup>23</sup> He developed the following chart to illustrate these three phases from the biblical examples of God-given dreams.<sup>24</sup>

Dreamer (non-believer)	Mystery Phase	Interpreter (believer)	Meaning Phase	Did Dreamer obey?	Response Phase
Cupbearer and Baker Gen 40:1-23	Cupbearer dreamed of vines and wine; Baker dreamed of birds Eating bread	Joseph	The cupbearer is restored and the baker is executed	n/a	The cupbearer forgot about Joseph
Pharaoh Gen 41:14-43	Dreamed of cows and stocks of grain	Joseph	7 years of bounty followed by 7 years of famine	Yes	Pharaoh obeyed and thousands saved from famine
Nebuchadnezzar Dan 2:1-49	Dreamed of a huge image	Daniel	Predictions of future kingdoms and their glory	Yes	Nebuchadnezzar responded in praise of God and promoted Daniel

<sup>23</sup> Scott, "Evangelism and Dreams," 178.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

Nebuchadnezzar Dan 4:10–37	Dreamed of large beautiful tree that is cut down to a stump	Daniel	The tree represented Nebuchadnezzar	No	Nebuchadnezzar was to humble himself and act justly. He refused, became insane and lost his kingdom for a time
Belshazzar Dan 5:1–30	Writing on wall with mysterious words	Daniel	Pending judgment for wickedness	n/a	No record that Belshazzar repented. Judgment came immediately
Saul of Tarsus Acts 9:1–26	Blinded by light and heard Jesus speak	Ananias	Told to go to Damascus and wait for instructions. Ananias explained the gospel	Yes	Saul called to repent and believe the gospel. He repented from persecuting followers of Jesus and became a believer himself
Cornelius Acts 10:1–48	In a vision, Cornelius was told to send for a man named Simon, but he did not know why	Peter	Peter explained the gospel	Yes	Cornelius and his family responded in faith to Peter's message and became followers of Jesus

*Table 3. Examples of Believers Interpreting God-given Dreams and Vision for Non-believers*

Dreams and visions are only the first step in a Muslim's journey to faith in Jesus Christ as his or her personal Savior and Lord. God still needs boots on the ground in most cases. Our people need to partner with what God does through dreams and visions; otherwise, many of those who receive a dream or vision of Jesus will never become committed followers.

How can we apply the three-phase process to ministry? First, by understanding these three phases, Adventists can be better prepared to respond when they hear that a Muslim friend or neighbor has had a dream. We know that God is not willing that any should perish (2 Pet 3:9), and this

understanding gives the Christian witness an advantage and helps them understand that maybe God sent the dream to move the person closer to God. The Bible has given believers information that God is compassionate and loves people even while they are living in sin. When believers understand God's great love for the lost they have an advantage for they know that God uses many means, even God-given dreams, to draw people to himself. So, when believers hear of a dream they do not start from zero, but with definite presuppositions that point to possible meanings and responses.<sup>25</sup>

Second, believers are promised the guidance of the Holy Spirit who gives discernment. "Discernment is informed and developed by a working understanding of scripture. While God's love for the non-believer is perfectly clear, the manner (or technique) in which God communicates or personalizes his love may not be."<sup>26</sup> Often in a dream or a vision "God is personalizing a message to the dreamer that will speak"<sup>27</sup> to the area of need, catch the person's attention, warn the person of danger, or turn the person from sin.<sup>28</sup> If you are unsure of the meaning of the dream, pray for wisdom and discernment. If you continue to draw a blank—pray. God will often give you wisdom and insight. Also ask the question: "How is God revealing his love for this person through this dream?" "How is the kingdom of God being revealed to the dreamer?" Ask a lot of questions. Listen to what the dreamer is saying and pray.

In May of 2012, I taught a group of church planters in Kyrgyzstan on this topic of dreams. We discussed how difficult it is to find the Muslims in society who are open to knowing more about the biblical Jesus. I suggested that one of the ways Adventists can find receptive people is to find those people God has blessed with a dream of Jesus. We worked together as a class to develop a plan. They committed to pray for a little Kyrgyz village for two or three weeks where they were presently studying with a family that was close to being baptized. At the end of the period of prayer they would go door to door and conduct a survey to find out if anyone had received what they believed was a God-given dream. The survey instrument was very simple, only asking the following questions:

Introduction: I am conducting a survey, looking for people who have had God given dreams. Would you be willing to answer a few questions?

<sup>25</sup> Scott, "Evangelism and Dreams," 181.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

1. Have you had what you believe is a God-given dream? \_\_\_Yes?  
\_\_\_No?
2. When did you have the dream?
3. Can you tell me a little about the dream?
4. What do you think the dream meant?
5. Do you know anyone else in your community who has had a God-given dream? \_\_\_Yes? \_\_\_No?
6. If yes, would you be willing to introduce me to that person?

The students who went door-to-door were amazed that the night before they conducted the survey God send a dream of a man in white to two of the families. I have never heard what happened after that, but if I was involved in witnessing in a Muslim context, I would definitely make dreams and visions a prominent part of my strategy. I would encourage all my members to pray that God would give a dream of Jesus to their Muslim friends and neighbors. I would encourage them to follow up by asking from time to time if they had received a God-given dream.

Dreams can never take the place of biblical revelation, but they illustrate the mighty power of the Holy Spirit drawing all people to a curiosity and hunger for the gospel message. Many of these spiritually hungry Muslim dreamers will never meet anyone who can explain to them the meaning of their dreams or the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. Without gospel messengers on the ground, the dreamers will remain ignorant of salvation in Jesus. "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" (Rom 10:14, NKJV).

Finally, every group of Adventists working in a Muslim context should recruit and train a dream team. Help them review all the dream and vision stories in the Bible. Encourage them to watch the video entitled *More Than Dreams* where five Muslims tell their stories of how a dream of Jesus started them on a journey to faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior and to go online and read other dreams stories. This is important to overcome the innate skepticism that seems to exist in many quarters of Adventism. Pray and seek God's wisdom in developing an approach to help them find those in their neighborhoods who have had a dream of Jesus, for such people seem to qualify as the person of peace of Luke 10. A possible approach may include a survey coupled with prayer as was done in Kyrgyzstan or it might be an ad in the newspaper or a sign with a telephone number encouraging anyone who has experienced a dream of a man in white to call. God is sending Muslims dreams of Isa; we need to find a way to help them along their journey so they can become committed disciples of Jesus Christ.