

## HOLDING TO DREAMS BENEATH A STARRY SKY

Texts: Genesis 15: 3-6; Genesis 26:4; Hebrews 11:8-12; Genesis 37: 5-9, 19

On our 47<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, my wife and I were in our back yard finding the Great Conjunction, i.e., when Jupiter and Saturn were in their closest encounter in four hundred years. This alignment of one planet “on top” of the other created a look of one very bright star. As a matter of fact, this alignment has been called the Christmas Star, many believing that at the time of Christ’s birth this is what the Wise Men were viewing that God used to guide them to our Lord and Savior. So, on December 21<sup>st</sup>, the darkest and longest night of the year, we found the brightest star (stars) that had been seen in four hundred years. A few years ago, my wife and I had just come back from sitting in our lawn chairs observing the Blood Moon, the second of the Tetrad phenomenon. The stars were above and behind us, and the moon before us. So much came to mind - first I thought of Psalm 8:3, 4: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" On our second date, Barbara and I were in Chicago’s Adler Planetarium over four- and one-half decades ago, dreaming of what life would be - if this relationship continued, what adventures God would have for us. Now here we are, 47 years of marriage behind us, four kids and 13 grandchildren later. And here we are tonight under the same stars and moon that Abraham and Sarah traveled under searching for the city whose builder and Maker is God (Hebrews 11:10). The same stars that Daniel observed when he said, "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3). Imagine what the beautiful starry nights were like as the wise men came looking for the young King of Kings and the bright and shining star God used to illumine their journey. And to think, this same luminary sky can be duplicated in the heavens above us today!

On one of those starry nights beneath the stars, before the sun came up, quietness settled over my wife and me as I thought about our children. We didn't say anything. We didn't have to; our conversation always gravitates to our kids when we are together and the conversation always, always morphs into prayer. That morning we were quiet as we prayed, wondering what the future will hold for our children and grandchildren. One verse that comes to mind in prayer for family is “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (III John, verse 4).

Genesis 15:5 says, “And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.” We cannot look into the starry sky without remembering the promise to Abraham of the blessing upon his children like the stars. My wife and I pray that God would always be as real to our children as He has been to us. Actually, we pray for a greater blessing on them. How can we look up without blessing the Lord who made all this? And how can we think about all this without focusing upon those we love beneath these stars and moon? And so, today I

pray for the blessing on our progeny and His Church. Without a doubt, it is man who is the object of God's great love. Before we were sitting beneath His stars, He was above the stars looking back on us and loving us through His Holy Spirit and paying us a "wake-up visit." "What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him? And that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?" (Job 7:17,18). I am encouraged that our Heavenly Father, who loves His children, should have compassion on ours - and His. Soon after this particular star-gazing night, the sun came up and the moon fell beneath the western horizon. The day was beginning; there was work to be done. And until Christ returns, I shall do what Psalm 113:3 commands: "From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD'S name is to be praised."

Returning from our backyard adventure and into the scheduled events of daily lives doesn't mean we should ever forget our dreams beneath a starry sky. Therefore...

### **1. Let us keep dreaming.**

Not everyone appreciates a dreamer. The dreamer speaks of those things he has clearly seen in his or her mind and heart. Observe the reaction of Joseph's brothers to his dreams: "And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh" (Genesis 37:5, 6, 19). In mocking sarcasm, they said, "...Behold, this dreamer cometh." Soon they were planning his death, until Reuben stopped them and they settled on selling him down to Egypt with the help of the Midianites. Joseph kept dreaming. He dreamed all the way down to Egypt and even dreamt himself in the second highest position in all of Egypt. And this dream saved his family and much of the civilized world.

As we read the rest of the book of Genesis, we find that all of Joseph's dreams came true. It looked as though his dreams would never come true, that his dreams had died. But he held on, did the right things, waited on the Lord and God brought these dreams to pass. Therefore...

### **2. Let us keep working.**

Joseph was falsely accused and imprisoned but even there, He found favor with God and with man, "And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper" (Genesis 39:22, 23). Joseph worked hard and the Bible said he was "...a doer..." If God has given you a dream, keep working at it (James 1:22-25). "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Ecclesiastes 9:10). Jesus said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4). Therefore...

### **3. Let us keep praying.**

There is an old saying, "Work as though everything depended on you and pray as though everything depended on God." This statement gives a little too much credit to our work, almost making it equal to God's strength. In truth, if we have strength, it is the strength God provides. Most often strength is derived through much prayer. When the disciples found themselves powerless against the works of darkness and failed in their ability to cast out a demonic stronghold, Jesus said, "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21). James said, "...ye have not, because ye ask not" (James 4:2). When we place prayer behind our work, God begins to work!

Therefore...

### **4. Let us keep hoping.**

In the Old Testament the word "hope" means expectation. In the New Testament it means anticipation with pleasure. The Bible doesn't mention this word in a "hope-so" sense; meaning things may or may not turn out. There is an assurance in this word. Allow me to ramify:

A. Hope sees the possible: "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease" (Job 14:7).

B. Hope calms us through the mystery until the future reveals the full plan of God. "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope" (Psalm 16:9).

C. Hope stirs our hearts to believe God. "And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee" (Psalm 39:7).

D. Hope takes God at His word: "Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word" (Psalm 119:114). Jeremiah 23:28a: "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath My word, let him speak My word faithfully."

E. Hope believes God through the troubled times. "Who passing through the valley of Baca (tears) make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools" (Psalm 84:6).

"And I will give her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor (trouble) for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt" (Hosea 2:15).

F. Hope that the Lord gives remains when all human reason of hope is lost. It was said of Abraham, "Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be" (Romans 4:18).

Perhaps you might go out on the next starry night and remember that those stars under which Abraham and Sarah traveled are there for many reasons, one being to remind you to keep on dreaming, praying, working and hoping. "Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude..." (Hebrews 11:12). Believe!

-Pastor Pope-