

UNFULFILLED DREAMS

As young children, most of us have had dreams that were unfulfilled. Our childhood dreams were usually based on love and admiration for an adult we knew who represented a profession or livelihood that interested us. On this basis, we might have developed a temporary interest in teaching, traveling, being a salesman, a soldier, a preacher, or interest in many other fields of endeavor which became personal dreams for awhile. Some of my childhood friends seemed to have a different dream every other day for their occupational future. And so those childhood dreams were very transitory and were not usually lasting or serious. They were largely unfulfilled.

But as we advanced to our teenage and pre-adult years, our dreams for the future included mates, children, occupation, and location. These dreams for our future were much more serious and longer lasting. During those advancing years, a new factor probably entered into our lives – whether or not to believe and obey God. If we did so, our basic dreams did not change but were brought into alignment with the will of God for us. And when we understood God's gifts and calling upon us, our dreams for the future probably began to coincide with our calling. As an example, someone called to be a teacher of the Bible might dream about specializing and excelling in Bible archaeology or Bible Hebrew or Greek. Although that would be a worthy dream or goal, it could go unfulfilled. We will look at some reasons why good dreams go unfulfilled; and at two major dreams recorded in the Old Testament that were both unfulfilled.

MAJOR DREAM – THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL

When God promised Abraham that He would give the entire land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants (first recorded in Genesis 12:5-8), Abraham had no children. But he built altars to the Lord in two different locations in Canaan and began to call on the name of the Lord. These were no doubt early steps of faith along with his initial obedience in leaving his country and relatives to go to the land that God wanted to show him.

The next time God spoke to Abraham was recorded in Genesis 13:15-16 as He actually showed Abraham the land that He would give to him and his descendants, also promising Abraham that he would have innumerable descendants. This conversation took place in Hebron, where Abraham built another altar. (Genesis 13:18) You may be noticing that in Abraham's relationship to God, he built an altar any place that God spoke something significant to him. They might be considered memorials as much as altars.

The third time God talked to Abraham about the descendants and the land that He would give Abraham, there was a somber prophecy revealed about the future of his descendants. This prophecy was given after God literally "cut covenant" with Abraham (Genesis 15:9-12) and was as follows: "Then He said to Abram; 'know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that's **not** theirs, and will serve them, and they will **afflict** them **four hundred years**. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.'" (Genesis 15:13-14 NKJV)

During the 400 year period of hard labor (slavery) in Egypt, the dream of every generation of Israelites was to be delivered from Egypt and escorted to the land first promised to their beloved ancestor Abraham.

As the time of Israel's deliverance and desert journey drew near, Joseph encouraged his brothers about the matter saying: "...But God will surely visit you, and bring you out of the land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." (Genesis 50:24 NKJV) Indeed, Joseph's generation, the fourth from Abraham, was the generation chosen by God to "return here" (to Israel). (Genesis 15:16 NKJV)

When the children of Israel were finally brought out of Egypt and were enroute to Canaan, their dream about being separated from Egypt and moving toward that good land began to diminish. Harsh desert conditions and lack of their favorite foods began to chip away at their dream of reaching the Land of Promise. The defining moment in their declining dream came when God commanded them to enter Canaan from Kadesh Barnea. Their fears of doing so overwhelmed them and they **refused** to go into the land which they had dreamed of entering and possessing.

Because they disobeyed God's command to go into Canaan, God sentenced the congregation to 40 extra years in the desert to allow time enough for those who disobeyed (20 years of age and up) to die off in the desert. Incidentally, the Israelites had a continuing fear of dying in the desert. The rebels simply would **not** see the Promised Land. But because they disobeyed, their dream also died – it was unfulfilled for another 40 years. Not only did they refuse to do what God commanded, they refused to do it **when** God wanted it done. Their opportunity for obedience was gone for one more generation, and so was the unfulfilled, suspended dream.

After a day or two of reflection on their decision not to go in to Canaan when God said to go, the Israelites realized they had sinned and tried to enter the land **after** God had commanded it. But theirs was a **late obedience** (which is disobedience) and their attempt ended in overwhelming defeat. All of this may be found in Numbers Chapter 14.

The only mitigation to God's punishment for Israel's major disobedience was that the Israelites would have an opportunity to obey the next command to enter Canaan 40 years later.

MAJOR DREAM – MOSES

Not only can a nation have unfulfilled dreams, so also can individuals. Moses' lifelong dream as leader of the children of Israel was to enter into the Land of Promise, making good on his assignment to bring the Israelites into it to possess their heritage in the Lord. (Exodus 6:8) It seemed that nothing would ever prevent the fulfillment of Moses' dream since he was a leader of Godly character whose record of obedience to God was impeccable. But then the unthinkable happened!

When the congregation was encamped at Kadesh, there was no water for the people or their animals. The people complained about being brought into this desert to be killed there along with their animals. (Numbers 20:4) and they questioned Moses once again about why he made them come out of Egypt. So Moses and Aaron sought guidance from the Lord. God told Moses to gather the people before the rock, **speak** to the rock before the people and the rock would yield plenty of water for the people and their animals. (Numbers 20:8) Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock as instructed, but then things turned sour. Moses berated the complainers and then **struck** the rock twice instead of **speaking** to the rock as he was told to do. Although Moses disobeyed by **striking** the rock, God did cause plenty of water to flow from it for all the people and animals. (Numbers 20:11)

God was very upset with Moses and immediately penalized him because he had not hallowed (reverenced) God in full view of the children of Israel. The penalty was that Moses would not be

allowed to "...bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." (Numbers 20:12 NKJV) Moses was barred from fulfilling his life's dream – entering into the land promised to Abraham's descendants. When Moses appealed God's penalty, God finally told Moses very abruptly: "Enough of that! Speak no more to Me of this matter." (Deuteronomy 3:26 NKJV)

God did mitigate His penalty on Moses without yielding to his request for clemency. He told Moses: "Go up to the top of Pisgah, and lift your eyes toward the west, the north, the south, and the east; behold it with your eyes, for you shall not cross over this Jordan." (Deuteronomy 3:27 NKJV) God allowed Moses to **see** the good land from atop Mt. Pisgah but steadfastly denied him **entry** into it.

WHY ARE SOME GOOD DREAMS UNFULFILLED?

1. **Disobedience**

We have just seen that two major dreams recorded in Scripture were unfulfilled – one delayed for an entire generation and one flatly denied and permanently unfulfilled. In each case, disobedience was the cause of unfulfillment. Commands and dreams that God clearly gives us requiring immediate obedience but which we do not obey in God's timing (perhaps intending to obey later) are really counted as disobedience. It is likely that such an opportunity to obey God on His terms is lost, as is any fulfillment of a dream attached to it.

Our only recourse for disobedience, whether it leads to unfulfilled dreams or not, is honest and deep repentance, exposing our hearts to God as we confess our sin and humbly ask for mercy as the tax collector did in Luke 18:13. Perhaps God will not restore the original dream but will bring His special mitigation for the loss of the dream. But you can be sure that when He accepts your confession of sin and your repentance from it that He will have something for you to do in His kingdom. Do not leave your local church in search of something to do. Remain there, patiently making yourself available for tasks your leadership feels are suitable **for** you, even if those tasks are not always suitable **to** you.

2. **Selfish Ambition (Philippians 2:3 James 3:14)**

Dreams that are good (in and of themselves) but are based on an improper motive (self promotion or selfish ambition) will probably not be fulfilled. If the fictional person in the second paragraph of this article who was called to be a Bible teacher had a dream of self notoriety in becoming a specialist in Bible archaeology or language, that dream might not be fulfilled, either. Dreams can be okay. Improper motives can kill dreams that are otherwise okay.

3. **Backing Off From Wanting a Dream Fulfilled**

- (a) I'm not sure I can do it.
- (b) I'm not sure I want to do it.
- (c) I don't want to go where I'd be called upon to go.
- (d) I don't want to spend the time and money to prepare for it.
- (e) I have other interests that I consider more important right now

This list of reasons why some Godly dreams are not fulfilled is by no means comprehensive. But it is inclusive of factors that probably cause God's people the greatest loss of dream fulfillment.

On a personal note, my calling/dream was to preach the gospel. But at the time that I was to attend seminary for additional training, I decided to enlist in the Army for 3 years of active service. When I was discharged from active service and returned home to be married, I had

mostly lost my desire to preach. It was about 16 years later that I was renewed in the Lord and I have never looked back to my apathy in God since. However, about 3 ½ years ago (2005), I learned through the “Under Cover” video teaching of John Bevere and the conviction of the Holy Spirit, that God was very disappointed in me for my disobedience in skipping seminary for the Army. I have since learned that my calling/dream was not only unfulfilled but will likely remain unfulfilled.

But my desire to exercise my spiritual gifts is stronger than ever and I am taking every opportunity to preach and teach. He has mercifully mitigated my loss and entrusted me with kingdom things to do.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We must **do** God’s will **when** He says to do it. If we **miss** doing His command so that His **timing** for our obedience is past, we cannot re-create the opportunity but can only accept God’s mitigation of our loss. God will certainly honor our genuine confession and repentance for missing the mark through our refusal to do as He has said and when He said to do it He will even begin again to give us duties in His kingdom. But the original dream may or may **not** be revived. Our best course of action is always to obey God and His will in His timing. Any dream associated with this action is sure to be fulfilled!