

## Visions, Dreams...and 'Near-Death' Experiences

In 1958 Word Faith preacher, **Kenneth Hagin**, claimed that 'Jesus' appeared to him with an angel standing three feet behind him. This 'jesus' said '*this is your angel...yes, your angel, and if you respond to him, he will appear to you as I will at times, and he will give you guidance and direction concerning the things of life...*' (Kenneth Hagin, '*I Believe in Visions*', P.93).

The modern phenomena of seeing angels and Jesus was then spurred along in the 1970's by Pentecostal **Jesse Du Plantis**, who had many visions and 'prophecies' from God, Jesus or angels. In one such meeting with an angel he claimed to be in a restaurant with friends having a meal, when God indicated to him that he was to immediately go to his room. There he heard the sound of a mighty rushing wind and was soon in a machine being transported with an angelic being. On arrival (why does God need a machine to transport angels and people to Heaven?) he saw Abraham, David and Paul and gave a description of the particular *physical* characteristics of each of the three.

Yet, this differs remarkably from scripture in that Duplantis sees the bodies of the three *before* the resurrection of the body. When the apostle John saw the martyrs in Revelation 20 he saw their *souls* and not their bodies.

The angel then showed De Plantis his heavenly 'house' which had similar furniture to his own house back home. He also saw Jesus 'preach'. The question could well be asked: why is Jesus preaching in an environment where we shall know Him fully (1Cor.13:12)? Duplantis asked 'Where is the Holy Spirit?' and was told 'Down on earth'...But is not the Holy Spirit omnipresent?

Then there was the incident where an angel said something that was wrong. So Jesse *punches* the angel who stumbles backwards! Are we to believe that men are stronger than angels and that this would be possible? *The problem with such tales is that they raise more questions than answers!*

Duplantis also believed Jesus gave him a special commission to preach that the Lord is coming soon. But does not the Bible already teach this?

Despite such wild stories, many churches had Jesse Du Plantis as keynote speaker in the 1990's and even distributed his videos of his unscriptural and extra-biblical tales.

In 1973, **Betty J. Eadie** supposedly 'died' and went to heaven. Nearly twenty years later, she published a book about her experience titled '*Embraced by the Light*' which became a New York Times best seller. Eadie records in graphic detail her journey to heaven and back. After complications from a hysterectomy operation, she was suddenly drawn out of her supposedly dead body and toward a great light in the distance. There she encountered the figure of a man bathed in brilliant light reaching out to her with pure, unconditional love. '*There was no questioning who he was...I knew that he was my Saviour, and friend, and God. He was Jesus Christ.*' This figure gave her power to understand the 'mysteries of the universe' including such things as the belief that *all the world's religions eventually lead to God.*

In 1987 **Kenneth Copeland** gave a false prophecy '*from Jesus Christ*' in which this 'jesus' promised that new and dramatic angelic manifestations would increase in the church and that many Christians would be transported to other

countries in an instant of time to preach a message and then be transported back into their kitchens just as suddenly.

Such unbiblical visions, dreams and prophecies flooded the shelves of Christian bookstores *as fact* in the late 20th century. They have made many writers very wealthy.

In the early nineties, as a Pentecostal, I confess for a time to being swayed by some of these publications, until a close friend challenged me to test one book that I had taken a particular interest in. It was titled '*A Divine Revelation of Hell*' by **Mary Baxter**. Mary claimed that her spirit left her body and was taken by Jesus on a personal tour of Hell over a period of thirty nights, and then over an additional ten nights she was taken to Heaven. On the way through Hell she describes the terrifyingly evil creatures she saw and then the people in the fires of Hell who had rotting pieces of flesh hanging off their skeletons.

On investigation, I found several areas of the book that flatly contradicted scripture. Mary sees skeletons in Hell. Yet, our body remains on earth when we die, and it will decay (Acts 13:36). Only the soul and spirit of a person goes to either Heaven or Hell. The apostle Paul speaks of being *absent from the body* from the moment of death, (2Cor.5:6-8; Phil.1:22-24). The resurrection body will not suffer decay, (1Cor.15:42-44). In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man is in Hell where he is *not consumed* by the flames, (Lk.16:22). The claim that there will be skeletons with rotting flesh in Hell is simply false!

Mary Baxter makes the claim that the object of Jesus taking her on a guided tour of Hell and of her writing the book is so that people will be warned about Hell and turn to Christ. But this again contradicts Christ himself in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. There the rich man argues for his brothers who are still on earth to be warned; but *Christ rejects this argument* and says: '*If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead*', (Lk.16:31).

What is wrong with that old 'faith once delivered' - the Word of God? Do we need these supernatural tales? Can we not still long for, and be excited about, the promise of 'the streets of gold', even if it only comes from all that is written in the Bible? Is it not enough that we have descriptions of the New Jerusalem as a place without tears, death, sorrow, or pain? The glory of God will shine there; a place beyond adequate human description?

The problem with these contemporary visions, dreams and near-death experiences is that by their nature *they undermine the authority of Scripture!*

The Bible teaches that before the closing of the canon of scripture that '*God spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets*' and that was often in *dreams and revelations*; **BUT** '*in these last days [has] spoken unto us by his Son...*' (Heb.1:1,2). The tense of '*has spoken*' indicates a full and final revelation!

*Everything we need to know about Heaven and Hell before His return is found in the Bible!* Until then we are warned: '*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto FABLES*', (2Tim.4:3-4).

**Terry Arnold**