

OLD MEN

“your old men will dream dreams.” (Acts 2:17)

Someone told of a 90 year old man who just got married. He supposedly called a realtor and said that he wanted to buy a five bedroom home near to an elementary school. While the truth of this story is doubtful, it is a fact that when God pours out His Spirit, “old men will dream dreams”.

These inspired words, quoted by Peter on Pentecost, were written by the prophet Joel many centuries before. Following the reign of Jehoshaphat, Judah rapidly declined into apostasy. Jehoshaphat’s son, Jehoram, made the mistake of marrying Athaliah, the pagan daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. This resulted in devastating plagues upon Judah. Joel promised, however, that a better day was coming. Joel promised that someday God would restore the years that the locusts had eaten away. Those precious promises would come in association with the pouring out of God’s Spirit.

While there may be other applications of Joel’s prophecy, we know for certain that it referred to the pouring out of God’s Spirit on Pentecost. Peter explained that those Spirit filled men were not drunk with wine. He said specifically “this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:17). Even though there may be many other applications of Joel’s inspired words, let us narrow our focus to “old men dreaming dreams”. As death approaches old men normally lose their desires (Eccl. 12:1). The many activities once enjoyed in youth are not fun any longer. When David was old, for example, they sought to revive his dreams by having a beautiful young virgin lie beside him to keep him warm (1 Ki. 1:2). It didn’t work! David wasn’t interested!

While it is appointed unto every man once to die, the power of God’s Spirit can cause even old men to dream dreams. Moses accepted the call of God at the age of 80. Abraham also became convinced that what God promised He could also perform. This happened, as you know, when Abraham was 100 years old and his body was as good as dead (Rom. 4:18 - 22). Zachariah too became a father as an old man (Lk. 1:13). Another old man named Simeon became convinced that he would not die until he had seen the Lord’s anointed (Lk. 2:26). Thomas Edison received his 1,033 patent at 81. Alfred Lord Tennyson published “Crossing the Bar” when he was 83. John Wesley preached every day when he was 88. Michelangelo painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel while in his late 80s. Stradivarius was still making violins at the age of 93.

The mandate of Christ is to be faithful until death (Rev. 2:10). It is inconceivable that a true child of God would retire do nothing of eternal significance in the last years of his life. Venerable Bede is widely regarded as the greatest of all the Anglo-Saxon scholars. He wrote around 40 books and is credited with being the first person to translate the Scriptures into the Anglo Saxon language. He died in the eighth century, and unfortunately was only able to complete the translation of John’s Gospel. As death drew near he was very weak. With only one chapter left, his scribe suggested that he rest. Bede replied “*Nay, it is easy, take up thy pen and write quickly*”. When the work was at last completed, Bede began to sing and yielded up his spirit to God.

The Christian life is not a stroll, it is a race. We do not have the option of quitting. Paul, as you know, compared himself to a runner. He ran, however, not for an earthly garland of fading leaves, but for a heavenly crown that would never fade away (1 Cor. 9:24 - 27). Paul feared, however, that by not finishing the race he could forfeit the eternal reward promised to him by God.

Yes! Old men get tired. Yes! The older we get the easier it is to sleep longer and sit down more often. Don’t forget, however, about the Holy Spirit! It is God’s Spirit that empowers old men to dream dreams. Those who have this hope renew their strength, mount up with wings like eagles, run and do not grow weary, walk and do not faint” (Is. 40:31). So old men, let’s dream a dream!