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To: Christian Fellowship
Subject: On Dreams, Visions, and a Hazel Tree

Greetings all in the Prophetically Perfect Name of JESUS!

I thought I would share the following inspirational story; adapted from an "Elijah List" mailing.

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Symbolism has always intrigued me. The way God weaves symbols and foreshadowing together through prophetic words, dreams, visions, pictures, and even human history is astounding. God authors history the same way He authors other forms of revelation, using symbolic language and powerful metaphors to shape our understanding of Him.

Throughout Scripture, we read many examples of how God speaks in symbolic language, as Numbers 12:6 says: "Then He said, 'Listen to My words: When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal Myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams.'" God spoke to Pharaoh in a dream that only Joseph could interpret. The same thing happened with Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel. Joseph of Nazareth also had a dream about his betrothed, Mary, during which an angel said, in essence, "Marry the girl!" That dream changed Joseph's mind, because prior to the dream, he was doubtful about her pregnancy (cf. Matthew 1). The so-called "Three Wise Men" were warned in a dream to avoid King Herod. Later on, Joseph had another dream instructing him to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt, also to avoid Herod. These were very practical, very prophetic dreams that contained real spiritual power and an impetus for change...

One resource for such symbols and metaphor is our dreams. Dream interpretation is a gift produced by meditating on our dreams and then asking God for His take on them. Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams, says Daniel 1:17. One of my closest friends has a gift of interpreting dreams. If you are a dreamer, write down your dreams and work through them with God. Open them up for comment and prayer. Your dream may not seem relevant in the moment, and a few weeks down the road, you may want to put them on the shelf. But you ought to get in the habit of writing things down; treating your dreams as you would any other type of revelation, because you never know when they will be called upon.

Visions, which are closely related to dreams, are another source of revelation. Sometimes, revelation comes through such pictures or even through moving scenes. Many of us have probably had such experiences. Some visions speak to us through everyday objects and may even use our own understanding of these things to speak prophetically. In Jeremiah 1:11-12, we witness this kind of vision:

"The word of the LORD came to me: 'What do you see, Jeremiah?' 'I see the branch of an

almond tree,' I replied. The LORD said to me, "You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that My word is fulfilled."

When God asked the prophet what he saw, Jeremiah looked around and noticed the almond tree branch. It was a perfectly common sight, totally unremarkable. However, the interpretation, timing and specific need of the people combined to produce a positive and significant prophetic interpretation.

I had a similar experience once, also involving a tree. I was about to speak to a meeting of several hundred people when the Lord directed me to a young woman in the middle aisle. I asked her to stand up. As she did, God showed me a picture of a hazel tree. I knew the type of tree it was, because my father and I had been landscape gardeners. All I had was this picture, so I asked the Lord, "What do you want to say?" There was nothing, so I started in with what I knew: "I'm seeing a picture of a hazel tree." I said, and then I began to describe its properties from memory." It has beautiful flowers and fruit. It can grow almost anywhere. It's resistant to disease, and its bark and flowers can be used for medicinal purposes, as a tonic or a sedative that brings comfort from pain. It's very hardy and resilient."

As soon as I came to the end of that statement, I knew what God wanted to do. "That's how God sees you," I continued, "He thinks you're beautiful and that you're going to bear good fruit in your life. You mustn't worry that you're no good. You're tough and able to resist the enemy. You'll grow in almost any situation." As I moved prophetically, she cried, and her friends cheered and laughed.

I finished prophesying, prayed for her, and taught my seminar. At the end of the meeting, she came to me." Thanks for what you said. You don't know this, but my name is Hazel," she told me. Apparently, that same afternoon, she and her friends had been drinking tea, and Hazel had been in a bad mood. "Hazel. Stupid name, Hazel," she had said. "Why couldn't I have been called by a prettier name? I hate it, and I wish I could change it."

God, in His incredible sense of humor, had used me to say, "Excuse me, but I chose your name. I gave it to you, and I gave it to you for this purpose." She told me that she had cried, because she realized that her name had been given to her for a reason. When she was in the womb, God had named her Hazel. What a powerful word from a perfectly ordinary and common source.

Metaphors and signs that flow from dreams, visions, history, and current events play a key role in the supernatural development of people and the communities to which they are joined. In Scripture, this practice of invading the logical world with supernatural communication is widespread and commonplace, almost ordinary. What is not ordinary (yet) for the Church is an awareness and acceptance of this form of revelatory communication and the ability to interpret it.

Graham Cooke