

The Voice *From* Heaven



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Gen. 3:8, 9; 2 Sam. 12:1-7; Isa. 59:2; Jer. 38:14-19; Ezekiel 4; Amos 3:7; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21; 3:1.*

Memory Text: “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe” (*Hebrews 1:1, 2, NIV*).

Key Thought: Since the fall of humanity, the Lord has been communicating with us through various means.

How much is a human worth? From a purely chemical standpoint, quite a bit. According to various estimates, the value of the proteins, enzymes, RNA, DNA, amino acids, and biochemicals within the human body may make a person worth, literally, millions of dollars.

Of course, our true worth can be understood only through the life and death of Jesus. If our value wasn't infinite in the sight of God, such an infinite price would not have been paid for our redemption.

How, though, has the Lord revealed to us the good news of our worth and our redemption? This week we begin by looking at the various means in which God has been communicating with us.

Yes, God is still talking to us sinful and degraded creatures. The crucial question is, Will we listen to what He is saying?

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 7.*

God's Search for Humanity

Before sin, Adam and Eve were in direct communication with God; after sin, that communication was broken. They no longer could speak face to face with their Maker. It was not because God had changed, but because Adam and Eve's relationship to Him had.

Read Isaiah 59:2. What principle seen here helps explain what sin has done to our relationship with God?

Because of sin, Adam and Eve were unable to stand at the presence of the Lord (*see Gen. 3:8*). They were afraid of God. Sin had driven them from the Creator. Moreover, the sin that separated humankind from the Creator also has separated nations, kingdoms, tribes, communities, churches, and families from each other. This is an unfortunate fact of life that we all have experienced, one way or another.

Read Genesis 3:9. What is the significance of this verse? Why would God, who knows all things, ask this question?

How ironic that we sometimes hear such phrases as "Man's search for God." The truth is the opposite, actually: God is searching for us. He is seeking us, using all kinds of ways and means to lead us to salvation. From Genesis to Revelation, from Moses to John, the Bible reveals God's search for humanity; it shows His desire to touch us, to let us know He is there and that He loves us despite our sins (*Isa. 5: 1-5, Matt. 23:37*).

"Where are you?" The question isn't so much about where we are physically as it is about our spiritual well-being. Where are we in relationship to our Creator and Redeemer, who has done so much for us? If you were to hear the question "Where are you?" from the Lord, how would you answer, and why?

God and the Prophets

Read Amos 3:7. What does that tell us about the importance of prophets to the human race?

From the earliest days—indeed, from the time that direct communication was broken—God used prophets to communicate with us. The prophets’ work consisted of numerous things: They revealed both comings of Jesus; they showed that God values human beings enough to choose from among them prophets to represent Him; they were the means by which the Lord revealed His love and character to His people; they sent warnings about impending judgments. The prophets also revealed the plan of salvation. And the Lord used the prophets to write the Bible.

Read 2 Samuel 12:1-7, Jeremiah 38:14-19, Ezekiel 4, 2 Peter 3:1. How do the prophets deliver their messages?

Compare 2 Chronicles 20:20 and Luke 16:31. Here we see two attitudes toward the prophets displayed. In a sense, we are in one of the two camps depicted here. Either we believe in what God says to us (often through His prophets) or we don’t. In the end, our attitude toward the prophets merely reflects our attitude toward Him.

How do we know if we really believe? Can we be deceived into thinking we believe when we really don’t, as were many of the leaders in Israel all through the nation’s history?

The answer is easy. Jesus said it numerous times. “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (*John 14:15, NKJV*); “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (*Luke 6:46*).

As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, we say that we believe in the writings of the prophets. Do we really? Have your actions in the past week reflected belief or unbelief, faith or lack of faith? What’s the only way you can answer this question correctly? If you could do something over, what would it be?

The Revelation Through Jesus Christ

While the revelation of God through His prophets is the most common method, the coming of Jesus Christ in this world is the greatest and most complete revelation of God ever given. After all, Jesus was God, here in the flesh. What more could we ask for?

Although Jesus came in a different form from what people had expected, His life and His teaching demonstrated to humanity the will of God. People who lived in the time of Christ looked for greatness to satisfy their physical expectations. They looked for power instead of humility, for majesty and not meekness. However, the coming of Jesus faithfully revealed the true character of God the Father.

How do the following texts show how Jesus fully revealed God?

Matt. 11:27

John 1:14, 18

John 14:8-11

2 Cor. 4:6

Heb. 1:1-3

Based on John 14:8-11 we know that those who have seen Him have seen the Father, because Jesus and the Father are “in” each other. Their intimate relationship is much more than that of a master and a disciple. The words that Jesus speaks are more than those of a mere human being; they are a revelation of the actions of God Himself. Therefore, when we become acquainted with Jesus, we become acquainted with God, the Father, as well. The best way to know God’s love and His goodness is to know Jesus Christ personally.

If you claim to know Jesus, how would you answer this question: What is Jesus like? Be prepared to share your answer with the class on Sabbath.

God Speaks Today

“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (*John 5:39*).

We have discussed divine communication through the prophets and through Jesus Christ. However, divine communication has not been confined to biblical times only.

In what way does God reveal Himself to us?

Job 12:7-10

Psalms 107:1-8

John 4:16-18, 26

John 5:39

Phil. 4:9

2 Tim. 1:5

The above texts clearly show that God never intended for us to be without certainty regarding the purpose of life. He made certain that we could know the truth and the means of salvation. God has revealed Himself through nature, science, the Bible, Jesus, divine providence in our lives, human relationships, and the Holy Spirit. He also reveals Himself through the image of God reflected in those who have dedicated their lives to Him.

What about you? How has God been communicating with you lately? The more important question, however, is, How well are you listening? Again, you can know the answer easily simply by asking yourself, Am I doing what the Lord is commanding me to, or not? There's your answer.

God Speaks Through the Bible

Read 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:20, 21. Summarize in your own words the basic message of these two texts. What should they be saying to each of us?

In many cases, the Lord specifically asked the prophets to write down His messages; many of them have been preserved. Those preserved writings are in the Bible. For example, “Moses wrote all the words of the Lord” (*Exod. 24:4*; see also *Exod. 34:27*, *Lev. 26:46*). Joshua was commissioned to write (*Josh. 24:26*). The Lord also asked Jeremiah to write a book containing the words He would give him. Years later the prophet Daniel (*Dan. 9:2*) tells of his reading Jeremiah’s message and how the Lord had promised deliverance for God’s people after the 70 years’ captivity. Daniel himself was told to write a book especially for those living at “the time of the end” (*12:4*). Thus the Lord reveals Himself through the Bible. As the written message, the Bible is an expression of God’s will.

It is interesting that the word *Bible* is not found in the Bible. It comes from the Latin word *biblia*, “books,” which comes from the Greek word *biblos*, meaning “a book.” The Holy Bible therefore means “the holy books.” This is indeed appropriate, because the Bible is composed of many books, 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New.

Despite a great deal of diversity in style and form, from the first book to the last, the Bible speaks about a loving God, the Creator of the universe, who reaches out to His sinful creatures. The theme of God’s love is the focus of the Bible, which is seen particularly through Christ, who came into this world, lived as a human being, and died on Calvary. This is the greatest truth of the universe. All major Bible truths, therefore, should be studied from this perspective.

What role has the Bible played in your relationship to God? What changes might you need to make so that the Bible could have an even greater impact in your walk with Jesus?

Further Study: Ellen G. White, “The Creation,” pp. 44–51; “The Temptation and Fall,” pp. 52–62; “The Plan of Redemption,” pp. 63–70 in *Patriarchs and Prophets*; “Introduction,” pp. v–xii in *The Great Controversy*.

“Jesus met the people on their own ground, as one who was acquainted with their perplexities. He made truth beautiful by presenting it in the most direct and simple way. His language was pure, refined, and clear as a running stream. His voice was as music to those who had listened to the monotonous tones of the rabbis. But while His teaching was simple, He spoke as one having authority. This characteristic set His teaching in contrast with that of all others. The rabbis spoke with doubt and hesitancy, as if the Scriptures might be interpreted to mean one thing or exactly the opposite. The hearers were daily involved in greater uncertainty. But Jesus taught the Scriptures as of unquestionable authority. Whatever His subject, it was presented with power, as if His words could not be controverted.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 253.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 God has never given up on us. What are the implications of this fact as we deal with our relatives, friends, or neighbors who belong to the unchurched community? How can we have the never-give-up spirit in reaching out to others?
- 2 Discuss your answers to Tuesday’s question. What things do you see in common? What are the differences? What can you learn from one another?
- 3 What can you say to someone who claims that he or she is earnestly seeking to know God and His will? What practical things can you say to help him or her hear the voice of God?
- 4 Share various encounters in which God spoke to you in a powerful manner. What happened? How did you know for sure that it was the Lord? Did you have any means to test the experience to know if it truly was of God? If so, what were those means?

Walking by Faith

by PAULINE NGELO

I am the youngest of 12 children in a Kenyan family. My family attended church, but I could not see where their religion changed them. My parents often drank and fought. Then my brother began attending the Adventist church. He shared his faith with us, and I started attending church with him.

In high school my parents sent me to a religious boarding school. I learned that students from the Adventist University of Eastern Africa in Baraton came to our school to hold services one Sabbath a month. I attended and was impressed that these students knew their Bible and loved God. They shared their faith and encouraged us to stand up for Jesus. I joined the baptismal class, and at the end of the year I was baptized.

But then I faced new problems. My school no longer allowed the students from Baraton to lead our worships. So we were on our own. Then the headmaster told us we could no longer worship together on Sabbaths. We met in our dormitory rooms to read our Bibles and pray together.

We faced other problems. We could not make up school work or exams we missed on Sabbaths, and the headmaster refused to help us when final exams were scheduled on Sabbath. We prayed, and God helped us. We passed. However, the next year we were told to give up our Sabbath worship or leave the school. I chose to leave.

My brother helped me to find a school where I could keep the Sabbath. I finished high school and enrolled at the Adventist university. I had to stop school to work in order to pay my school fees, but now I am completing my studies. Just think, I, the youngest and least in my family, am the first to complete a university degree. Just as the witness of former students at Baraton changed my life, I have

sought to encourage other young people who face difficult times to trust Him, for He shall bring their desires to pass.

Our mission offerings help support this school and hundreds of others around the world. You can have a part in their ministry.



PAULINE NGELO (left) was a student at the University of Eastern Africa in Baraton, Kenya, when she shared her testimony.