

1. The Creator Speaks (4Q 2026 Gift of Prophecy)

Biblical material: Gen. 1:27, 28; Gen.3:1-8; Luke 15:11-32; Gen. 3:14-24; Exod. 19:16-22; John 10:27-30; Hebrews 1:1, 2.

Quotes

- God speaks to me not through the thunder and the earthquake, nor through the ocean and the stars, but through the Son of Man, and speaks in a language adapted to my imperfect sight and hearing. *William Lyon Phelps*
- It's good to want God to speak to you, but smarter to let God speak through you, because when God speaks through you, more than one can hear. *Donald L. Hicks*
- God speaks to us, I would say, much more often than we realize or than we choose to realize. *Frederick Buechner*
- God's Word does not merely impart information; it actually creates life. It's not only descriptive; it's effective too, God speaking is God acting. *Michael Horton*
- Every happening, great and small, is a parable whereby God speaks to us, and the art of life is to get the message. *Malcolm Muggeridge*
- Call out to me, and I will answer you, explaining to you amazing, hidden things about which you don't have any idea. *Jeremiah 33:3.*

Questions

How do we know that God wants to communicate with us? Why is there such disagreement in what we think God is telling us? How is it that God doesn't speak audibly to us anymore, as he appears to have done in the past? What is the main purpose of God's communication? How does God react when we refuse to listen to what he says?

Bible summary

Genesis 1:27, 28 tells us that we are made in the image of God. Genesis 3:1-8 is the account of the Fall. Luke 15:11-32 is the parable of the Prodigal Son. Genesis 3:14-24 gives us God's decisions as he deals with the results of the Fall. In Exodus 19:16-22 God speaks to his people at Mount Sinai. In John 10:27-30 Jesus says that his sheep hear his voice. "God, who in the past spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at various times and in many ways, has in these last days spoken to us through his Son." Hebrews 1:1, 2.

Comment

As a church, we return to the issue of the gift of prophecy on a regular basis, mainly to support acceptance of the ministry of Ellen White. Because of the lingering questions, it is obviously seen by church administrators as an important topic to be repeatedly promoted. It is also the fundamental belief that is most frequently criticized by those outside the church. Adventist Fundamental Belief #18 states in part that, "This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and we believe it was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. Her writings speak with prophetic authority and provide comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction to the church."

So as we go through this quarter we need to keep an open mind as we try to understand what the Creator God is saying to us, and how he does so.

That there is a God and that he wants a meaningful relationship with us is an essential lesson to learn from Scripture, especially in the Creation story. God direct communication with Adam and Eve, their discussions in the "cool of the day" show the original plan. Beyond this, The Old Testament records God's direct communication with human beings. In the Biblical material we're given the examples of various OT characters.

Abraham has a number of conversations with God, of which one example is detailed in Genesis 18. Note how Abraham is ready to talk very directly, and while he is respectful, he does not shrink

from openly expressing himself. (An even stronger example is his “bargaining” with God over Sodom and Gomorrah).

Jacob speaks of his “face to face” encounter with God in Genesis 30. No question here whether it’s really God talking! Jacob receives direct communication, and knows it. Similarly Moses in Exodus 4 and later—remember the time when Moses also argued with God over the proposed destruction of the Israelites, Moses being so concerned for God’s reputation. Also note: “The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend.” Ex. 33:11 NIV. All these accounts are examples of what is usually termed “special revelation,” in contrast to “general revelation” that is supposed to be derived from observation of nature and the universe. One example given is Psalm 19—where David understands something of God from what he sees.

In the New Testament, special revelation is wrapped up in the message and mission of Jesus, as noted in John 1:14 and John 3:16. Colossians 2:9 makes the position crystal-clear: “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.” So in seeing and hearing Jesus, God is communicating with us.

Today people are still looking for communications from God, but all too often in the wrong places. One lady was cooking a tortilla and was suddenly shocked to see “the face of Jesus” appear. In another incident, cars caused a jam on a highway when someone claimed to have seen Jesus in the shine from a soybean oil tank beside the road. Someone saw the shadow of Jesus on the side of their refrigerator, and it only disappeared when the neighbor turned off their porch light. Another thought they saw Jesus in a billboard picture of spaghetti, but others dismissed the sighting, saying it was only Willy Nelson...

Aside from all the hype, and the odd fascination with such “sightings,” the more disturbing aspect is surely what this implies. Our society has become obsessed with image, but doesn’t want to know anything about content. What a sad commentary on the way we are!

For if God wants to communicate with us, would it be through a burnt image on a tortilla, or weeping statues, or bleeding stigmata on icons? As one skeptic commented “when Jesus appears, it’s hardly likely it will be on the side of a kitchen appliance.” Absolutely! How trivial all this seems, and such a distraction from the truth that God came to share with us at such great cost.

So let’s make sure we’re looking in the right place—in God’s Word to us!

Ellen White Comments

God speaks to us through his providential workings, and through the influence of his Spirit upon the heart. In our circumstances and surroundings, in the changes daily taking place around us, we may find precious lessons if our hearts are but open to discern them.... God speaks to us in his word. Here we have in clearer lines the revelation of his character, of his dealings with men, and the great work of redemption. Here is open before us the history of the patriarchs and prophets and other holy men of old. They were men “subject to like passions as we are.” We see how they struggled through discouragements like our own, how they fell under temptations as we have done, and yet took heart again and conquered through the grace of God; and beholding, we are encouraged in our striving after righteousness. As we read of the precious experiences granted them, of the light and love and blessing it was theirs to enjoy, and of the work they wrought through the grace given them, the spirit that inspired them kindles a flame of holy emulation in our hearts, and a desire to be like them in character,— like them to walk with God. {CE 56}

God speaks to nations and to cities, sending them messages of mercy, which, if accepted, would save them from great calamities. If they would be guided by his voice, he would be their protector, their front guard and their rear ward. But like the Jews they know not the time of their visitation. In their pride of heart they refuse his guidance, and are left to walk in their own counsels, and, like God’s ancient people, to reap the harvest which they have sown. {HS 206-7}