

## **God Communicates With Us Through The Bible**

'God said, "Let there be light," and there was light' (Genesis 1:3). 'Grass withers and flowers fade but the Word of our God stands forever' (Isaiah 40:8). 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God' (2 Timothy 3:16).

When the Lord spoke, light was created as were clouds, water, dry land, the air we breathe, plants, trees, fruit, grass, sun, moon, stars, galaxies, outer space, wild animals, domestic livestock, sea creatures, birds, atoms, invisible cells and everything else God created by His spoken word, but He formed the first human with His creative hands out of the earth and blew the breath of His life into him (Genesis 1:1 to 31; 2:7). 'The Word of our God stands forever' means the Word of God is eternal. Throughout the Bible, God invokes His inspiration by using the words, "Thus says the Lord," or "God said," or words like that. All scripture is God-breathed and God-inspired. He left no room for the opinions of the writers. They were to write down what they were instructed to write, making the Bible the only infallible written series of documents, all told to prophets and apostles by the Lord God Himself and recorded in writing by the prophets, apostles or their scribes. All the scribes were men with one exception. In the amazing Book of Job, his scribe was his wife who wrote intimate details of Job's suffering; details only a loving wife would know about.

The Bible is the final Word on all matters pertaining to mankind, the earth, eternity and all religious beliefs. What God spoke, is what is and there is nothing mere humans can do to change God's mind about creation or to change His ultimate purposes regarding salvation. By studying His spoken and written Word, we can have the security of knowing God never wavers. He is never erratic. He never changes (Malachi 3:6). God communicates with us by what He instructed the prophets and apostles to write on His behalf. We communicate with God through prayer. Many church-going Christians rarely read the Bible so their communication with the Lord is limited. They are scripturally or Bible illiterate. The Bible has stood the test of time. It is as relevant in today's complex world as it was when the Lord first told the holy prophets what to write centuries ago. Archaeology, history and science all confirm the written words of the Bible. Prophecies given thousands of years ago always come to pass in God's time and in His own way. The Bible gives hope and inspires non-believers to trust. For example, if we see someone sitting in a café reading their Bible and praying, we know we are with a person who knows God and usually the unsaved of this world will honour and respect that person. The God-inspired teachings of the Bible give us a code of morality and justice that helped bring about the open democratic governments we enjoy today. Many of our modern laws are based on the Bible. The connection between science and scriptures began over 5,000 years ago with the Book of Enoch and continues to this day. God has a special concern for Adam and his descendants. It is incredible the Lord would have so many angelic creations that are mentioned in the Bible, yet the whole Bible was written solely for the very last of all His creations; mankind. Jesus, Who is God's Son and the Word of God, was a descendant of Adam and Eve through his mother Mary's bloodline. Although the Bible briefly mentions Nephilim, the Bible was not written for them or the heavenly angelic hosts – the Bible was written exclusively for us – the descendants of Adam and Eve.

The Bible is one way God communicates His will to us. He teaches us about His creation through His Word. God revealed Himself through visions, dreams or He directly impressed His will on the different authors who wrote the different books over a vast time period. They wrote down what the Lord told them to write by audible instruction or as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. The Bible is a spiritual book written by spiritually inspired writers. Abraham Lincoln once said, "The Bible is the best gift God has ever given to mankind. All the good from the Saviour of the world is communicated to us through the Bible." The difference between divine spiritual inspiration and human earthly inspiration is when God inspires someone, He always reveals Himself in an authoritative way. God sometimes dictated every individual word, such as the dialogue between God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit during creation when they said, "Let Us make man in Our image after Our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). Or when God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil. Now, lest he put forth his hand and also take of the Tree of Life and eat of it and live forever ..." (Genesis 3:22). Or the dialogue between Eve and the devil (Genesis 3:1 to 7). Only by word for word dictation could Moses have known what was said when he wrote down the creation story. Only the Holy Spirit could have revealed to Isaiah the secrets regarding the birth, life and crucifixion of Jesus so it could be written down as prophecy to be fulfilled at a later time (Isaiah 53:1 to 12).

Sometimes God gave the inspiration within the context of the message He was trying to convey, such as when the apostles wrote the New Testament. At the time the apostles wrote the letters, they would not have known the letters would be copied word for word and translated into several languages then used to teach the expansion of Judaism that became known as Christianity. By revelation, Peter understood the letters were to be used as scripture to add to the Jewish sacred scriptures he referred to as 'the other scriptures',

and to ignore the new writings of the apostles was to the peril and destruction of the individual. The letters of the apostles were used to help people grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour. 'Regard the patience of our Lord as salvation, as our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him (from God) wrote to you as in all of his letters, speaking in them of sin. In those letters there are some things that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unsettled twist as they do to the other scriptures (the Jewish scriptures), to their own destruction ... Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus. To Him be the glory both now and forever, Amen' (2 Peter 3:15 to 18).

The prophets said, "This is the word of the Lord to ..." The prophets understood the divine message was from God when it came to them, as opposed to the words of the false prophets. 'False prophets have painted for them with whitewash, seeing false visions and divining lies to them saying, "Thus says the Lord God," when God has not spoken' (Ezekiel 22:28). The New Testament writers always quoted Old Testament verses and they revealed many fulfilled prophecies. The way the apostles brought the prophecies to light as they were teaching, brought unity to the whole Bible believing community then known as 'The Way' or 'The Assemblies' (Acts 9:31; 15:41; 16:5; 19:23). The Tenach or Old Testament is the complete narrative of a young nation (Israel) growing to maturity under the nurture of God. The New Testament is the narrative of a young Man (Jesus) Who grew to maturity under the nurture of Godly parents who were from the nation nurtured to bring forth that Man. From Jesus came the extension of Judaism once called 'the Way', now called Christianity. The Old Testament set the stage for Jesus to come and the New Testament is the description of the fulfilment of that ideal. Through Jesus, God became Man and lived among us to give us a full definition of God Himself. When we see Jesus, we see God the Creator. That is communicated to us through the Word. Jesus said, "If you had known Me you would have known My Father. From now on you will know Him and have seen Him ... Those who have seen Me have seen the Father" (John 14:7 & 9). 'Jesus is the living image of the invisible God' (Colossians 1:15).

Many people see what they think are contradictions and mistakes in the Bible. One seeming contradiction are the genealogies of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 1:1 to 17 that says Joseph's father is Jacob, and Luke 3:23 to 38 that says Joseph's father is Heli. It is not a mistake. Heli became the father-in-law of Joseph while Jacob was his biological father. Matthew's record is Joseph's genealogy, informing us Joseph was from the Royal line of David from the tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:14; Revelation 5:5). Luke's record is Mary's genealogy revealing she was from the priestly line of the Levites, a descendent of Aaron like her aunt/cousin Elizabeth (Luke 1:5 & 36), giving Jesus the authority to be both our King and Priest. If we read the epistles in the context the genealogies were written, we must understand, the people to whom Matthew and Luke were writing, lived there in Israel at that time, they knew the truth and they needed no explanation as to the different names. When a person married into a Jewish family, they were accepted as being like a blood relative. If we look at the culture and read about the very close relationship Moses had with his father-in-law Jethro, we will understand the mode of speech in Luke's record. Matthew traces Jesus' bloodline back to Abraham. Luke traces His bloodline back to Adam. Jesus is the Covenant Child of Abraham and He is also the second Adam and very human. 'The first man Adam, became a living soul. The last Adam (Jesus) became a life-giving Spirit' (1 Corinthians 15:45).

If we study the Bible fully, we will see the apparent contradictions counter each other and explain each other. It helps to understand the character of God the Father and of Jesus. We need to remember the Bible was written in the culture, language, religion and land of the Jewish people. The more we mature in God the more the apparent contradictions are explained. The Bible tells us the history of the Jewish people that led to the Jewish Messiah, the only hope for mankind and the one and only way of salvation. Not all Bible characters were perfect. They made human mistakes but their record of repentance is what we need to take to heart. The Bible tells us honestly about God's people and their human weaknesses. God never tried to cover up the sins of His people. He told us what they did, but He also tells us how they repented with sorrow and tears, and turned to the only Hope we have and that is God Himself, the Rock of our salvation (Psalm 89:26).

What is the purpose of the Bible? Before sin entered mankind, God used to converse with Adam and Eve face to face. After sin separated us from God, He had to do something to communicate with us, and that was to educate people and write to us. For example, if we are separated from family by distance and cannot see them face to face, we can communicate by writing and receiving letters, and more recently by email or text message. Sin separated us from God so He communicates His will and commandments by written expression we call the Bible. Further to that, the Lord wants all mankind to have knowledge of His will, precepts and oracles and He used the Jewish people to relay those things to the world (Romans 3:2). People forget quickly so to prevent having the commandments forgotten, God had it written down for us to keep fresh in our memories even a few thousand years after He told the children of Israel what He expected

of them. To confirm that, we only have to look at the ancient cultures that have the stories of creation and Noah's Ark passed down by word of mouth and we can see how twisted and distorted the stories have become. Compare those distorted stories with the Word of God and we can see how wise it was for God to insist the history of creation, the judgement of Noah's Ark and the Hebrews' exodus from Egypt be written and taught to children. First, Aaron and Moses needed to teach the adults. 'You are to teach the children of Israel all the statutes which God has spoken to them by Moses' (Leviticus 10:11). Then the adults were instructed to teach their children. 'Make them known to your children and your grandchildren ... so they may teach their children' (Deuteronomy 4:9 & 10). 'These words I command you today will be on your heart and you will teach them diligently to your children, and will talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up' (Deuteronomy 6:6 & 7; 11:19). 'God established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a teaching in Israel that He commanded our forefathers to make known to their children so the generation yet to come might know, the children who will be born will arise and tell their children so they could set their hope in God and not forget the works of God but keep His commandments' (Psalm 78:5 to 7).

Usually, God reveals His will and knowledge via the Holy Spirit but there are a few people mentioned in the Bible who enjoyed direct audible communication with God Himself. Moses was one person who had face to face conversations with the Lord. 'God spoke to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend' (Exodus 33:11). Abraham also had direct dialogue with the Lord when he interceded for any righteous people that may have been in Sodom and Gomorrah before those cities were destroyed by God in righteous judgement (Genesis 18:22 to 33). After Jesus was resurrected, the Holy Spirit came down to mankind and now we can speak directly to God and the Holy Spirit will reveal God's will to us. 'The Holy Spirit said to Philip, "Go and join yourself to this chariot"' (Acts 8:29). 'While Peter was wondering about his vision the Holy Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men seek you"' (Acts 10:19). 'As the apostles served the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Separate Barnabas and Saul for me for the work to which I have called them"' (Acts 13:2). 'The Holy Spirit expressly warns, in later times some believers will fall away from the faith, paying attention to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons' (1 Timothy 4:1). 'As the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts"' (Hebrews 3:7 & 8). 'Those who have a (spiritual) ear, let them hear what the Holy Spirit says to the assemblies (churches)' (Revelation 2:7). Whenever we hear from the Holy Spirit, we need to test what has been said to us, to confirm what we have heard is in fact from God and not from a deceiving evil spirit. The way to test what we have heard is by studying the Bible. 'Test all things and hold firmly to what is truth' (1 Thessalonians 5:21). 'Receive the Word with all readiness of the mind, examine the Scriptures daily to see if these things are so' (Acts 17:11). The standard by which we test what has been said to us is by the Word of God. If what we believe we have been told does not line up with scripture, then we need to reject it or pray for clarity. The Bible is our 'text book' or 'manual' by which we must test our direction. The Word of God is how He communicates His will.

It does matter what version of the Bible we read or study and it does matter how we approach the study of the Bible. If at all possible, it would be good to read the Bible in its original language – Hebrew, or at least a literal translation from Hebrew to your own language in the one book. Literal translations of the Bible are preferable. When we compare a translation to a paraphrase we will notice many disparities. Once we are familiar with the Hebrew, we will be able to comprehend what God is saying more clearly. There are many idioms, nuances and cultural differences in the Hebrew language that do not make any sense in a translation or a paraphrase. The people who read the Bible in our day do not understand the culture or idioms of the original Hebrew language or of the Jewish people who lived long ago. In English, for example, we have hundreds of homographs, homophones and homonyms as well as punctuation that can change the meaning of a whole verse just by using the wrong spelling or placing a comma in the wrong place. Translators may also have their own bias and change what was originally written to line up with their own beliefs. Further to that, if a translator does not believe the scriptures are all God inspired or directly dictated to the Bible writers, their choice of words may deviate or worse, mislead. Sadly, modern translations and paraphrases have made the Bible a virtual 'modern' religious book, ignoring the fact the New Testament was written as an extension of Judaism, not a replacement. Our roots and the foundation of our belief in God stems from Hebraic faith. However, to be able to teach English-speaking people about the Bible, we need to write the Bible studies in English.

The Bible has been very carefully copied word for word by dedicated Jewish people called scribes, who were careful to retain even the smallest letter of the Hebrew script. Jesus had a deep respect for the Word of God, teaching and preaching while constantly quoting the Bible as His reference. To keep ourselves in the love of God, to grow in purity, to walk in the path of holiness and righteousness, we must closely adhere to the Word of God. To stay focused on the Lord we need to more than just scan the Bible for a few minutes each day.

We need to read it, study it, inhale the words slowly as though He is our every breath and make the whole Bible come alive in our hearts. The Bible is not just a book, it is a living, breathing entity that reveals God our Creator to us, reveals our Saviour, works towards our salvation, leads us to be made fit to enter the Kingdom of God and shows us how we are to live and conduct our lives to please God. Christians who do not believe in the literal prophecies regarding Israel and the return of the Jewish people to their own land, do not know God nor do they comprehend His eternal desire and love for His chosen people.

We all need God in our lives. He really is our every breath. 'The Spirit of God has made me and the breath of the Almighty gives me life' (Job 33:4). The Bible lights up the spiritual path we are to walk. 'Your Word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path' (Psalm 119:105). 'Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding' (Proverbs 9:10). Unless we have a reverential fear and respect for the Lord, we cannot learn His wisdom nor can we obtain knowledge and understanding of the spiritual heavenly world we will eventually enter. The Lord is in the process of creating a brand new heaven and earth for believers to inhabit after the final judgement when we will receive our heavenly rewards for righteous service, then God Himself will dwell with us. The Bible is where we obtain such information. Jesus said, "In My Father's house (heaven) are many houses. If it were not so, I would have told you. I AM going to prepare a place (a home) for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will receive you to Myself so where I am (in heaven) you may be there also" (John 14:2 & 3). 'Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth. The former things (of earth) will not be remembered nor come into mind' (Isaiah 65:17). 'The new heavens and the new earth that I will make will remain before Me, says the Lord' (Isaiah 66:22). 'According to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells' (2 Peter 3:13). 'I (Apostle John) saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth have passed away (been destroyed by fire) ... I heard a loud voice out of heaven saying, "Behold, God's dwelling is with people and He will dwell with them. They will be His people and God Himself will be with them as their God' (Revelation 21:1 & 3). Jesus said, "Behold, I will come quickly. My reward is with Me to repay to each man according to his work ... Blessed are those who do His commandments so they may have the right to the Tree of Life and may enter in by the gates into the heavenly city" ... He Who testifies these things says, "Yes, I come quickly." Amen! Yes come Lord Jesus' (Revelation 22:12, 14 & 20).

Amen and God bless you.

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