



# Articles

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## God's Communication and Revelation to Man

### Part 1: Satan's Counterfeit

From the beginning of time man has recognized and desired to reach into and to experience the unseen spiritual realm, which is viewed as a place where superhuman knowledge and powers can be obtained from the "divine" beings that dwell there. As soon as man was created in the Garden of Eden, Satan lost no time in tantalizing Eve with what could be hers in his part of this realm if she heeded his words. Coming to her in the form of a serpent, he told her, "For God knows that in the day you eat from it [the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and of Evil] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5; NASB).

As Eve ate of the forbidden fruit and gave it to Adam as well, life-changing consequences occurred for mankind. Not only did man come under the dominion of Satan with his internal domain of the flesh established in each one, but the door was opened for man to use various means to pierce into the evil spiritual realm to access hidden powers and to gain supernatural "enlightenment."

The appeal of this forbidden realm never lost its grip on man. Nimrod built the Tower of Babel to try to connect into it from the physical realm, an act which prompted God to intervene and to scatter the people by scrambling their languages. From that point on, however, Babylon came to represent man's attempts to connect with the supernatural enlightenment that Satan promised to Eve. The Babylonian Mystery Religions were formed soon after Nimrod's death for this purpose, eventually morphing into the current day Illuminati. Many of the world's false religions that resulted from the scattering of the people at the Tower of Babel have prescribed ways of attaining access to a realm of ungodly illumination (including via Yoga).

As the Angel of Light (2 Cor. 11:13-15), Satan has many supernatural phenomena to offer from his realm. After all, he and the other angelic sons of God were created with supernatural intelligence and power fashioned after their Maker (Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:13-17; Job 38:4-7). This is why they are called "sons of God." They represent much of what God Himself is but in a diluted form. They also have the "knowledge of good and evil" and a free will, which allow them to use their supernatural abilities to do things that appear righteous as well as those that are outright evil.

Unfortunately, those who followed Lucifer and fell from their divinely appointed positions in the heavenlies remain deeply determined to follow a path that is opposed to God and to lure as much of mankind as possible into following them. Just as God needs mankind to build His kingdom on earth, so also Lucifer seems to need man in order to fulfill the goals of his kingdom. For this reason, if he cannot get man to a place of overt allegiance, he will seek to connect him in seemingly innocuous and covert ways.

Because the sons of God bear such a close resemblance to God Himself and have the ability to use their supernatural abilities for both good and evil, they are particularly adept in deceptively manipulating man into their schemes. Even the elect of the Christian Church are being fooled and brought unknowingly into connections to them through the manifestations of the false holy spirit (Kundalini/Queen of Heaven in disguise) and the healthy benefits touted in connection with the practice of Yoga, martial arts, and various Eastern medical practices involving the manipulation of ungodly chi energies in the body (Mat. 24:24).

In equally deceptive ways Lucifer entices people into New Age practices and other ways of tapping into the unseen realms where they can experience supernatural phenomena. Throughout His Word, God has clearly forbidden the practice of connecting with the evil spiritual realm through any means or for any purpose, including consulting the spirits of the dead (Lev. 19:26; Deut. 18:9-14). He also condemns listening to false prophets, who see false visions and claim to hear from God but speak messages from false gods and their own imaginations (Jer. 23:9-40; 29:8-9; Ezek. 13:1-23; 22:28).

What God offers instead to those who choose to be born again by faith into His family is a genuine connection to Himself through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who is a spirit of wisdom and revelation (Isa. 11:2; John 1:12; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 1:17; 2:8-9; 1 Peter 1:3-5). Through this means we have the potential to connect with the mind of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (1 Cor. 2:16; Col. 2:3). In other words, if we obey God and reject Satan's counterfeits, which ultimately lead to death and destruction, God allows us to connect directly to Himself, the highest source of supernatural wisdom, revelation, insight, and power, which lead to abundant and everlasting life (Prov. 14:12; John 10:10; Rom. 6:23; 8:1-6).

## Part 2: How God Spoke to the Early Patriarchs

The predominant way that God communicated with the first generations of the people He created was through direct, first-hand, verbal speech. In fact, before Adam and Eve sinned, He seemed to have had daily, in-person, fellowship with them in the Garden of Eden. I believe this reveals the deep desire of His heart to have this kind of daily intimacy, communion, and interaction with His beloved children. Unfortunately, the free will He granted to man so that man's participation in such a relationship would be voluntary led man to enter into sin, which changed everything. Such intimate contact between a holy God and sinful man was no longer possible.

Even then, however, God did not stop communicating with man, and He did so in a direct and personal manner. He told Adam and Eve directly what their punishment would be for disobeying His commands not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Gen. 3:16-19). He gave direct counsel to Cain after he brought an inappropriate offering to the Lord. Then He questioned Cain directly and meted out his punishment after Cain killed Abel, even allowing Cain to negotiate with Him for his protection (Gen. 4:3-16).

God also spoke directly to Noah about His plans to destroy the entire population of the earth and gave him explicit instructions for building an ark to preserve the lives of his family and representations of all types of animals (Gen. 6:13—7:4). Noah obediently followed exactly what God told him to do.

God spoke frequently with His chosen servant Abraham, giving him directions for his life as well as establishing His covenant with him and his generational line. He also gave him the unusual promise that Sarah would bear him a son in her old age as well as instructions and promises concerning Ishmael, his son through Hagar (Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 17:1-22; 21:12-13). As Abraham's offspring grew, God also spoke directly with them when necessary, such as when He gave specific directions to Jacob to return to his family and then to establish his home in Bethel (Gen. 31:3; 35:1).

God was also willing to respond to specific questions that man asked of Him and to provide signs that what He spoke was true. When Rebecca, Isaac's wife, struggled with the difficulties of her pregnancy, she asked God for understanding and He gave it to her (Gen. 25:21-23). When Abraham asked Him for a sign that he truly would possess the land that God promised to him, God responded with a vivid depiction of a smoking pot and a flaming torch passing between the divided animal carcasses that God instructed him to lay out opposite each other (Gen. 25:8-17). When Abraham's servant asked God for a sign regarding the wife that he was sent to find for Isaac, the servant specified to God what the sign would be, and God brought it to pass just as the servant had requested (Gen. 24:12-20).

God's words to the early patriarchs were often accompanied by a theophany, or a visible representation of God. Usually this was in the form of the "Angel of the Lord," whom many believe was the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all experienced these divine visitations and clearly recognized them for what they were (Gen. 12:7; 17:1-21; 18:1-33; 22:11-18; 26:1-5, 24; 32:24-29; 35:9-13). Even Hagar was visited, encouraged, and directed by the Angel of the Lord (Gen. 16:3-13). Jacob not only saw the Angel of the Lord but physically wrestled with Him, an event that left him crippled in the hip but blessed in regard to his imminent reunion with Esau (Gen. 32:24-29).

God also spoke to the early Patriarchs through visions and dreams. In Genesis 15 God and Abraham interacted within a vision as God promised him an heir and a land and went through a covenant ritual with him. God spoke to Jacob in a night vision giving His approval for him to go to Egypt, following Joseph and Pharaoh's invitation to do so when the famine was so great in his own country (Gen. 46:2-4). God also promised that He would go with them and would bring him and his extended family back from there.

God used dreams to give warnings, instructions, and prophesies. He warned Abimelech in a dream against taking Sarah as his wife (Gen. 20:1-7). God gave instructions to Jacob and Laban in dreams (Gen. 31:10-13; 24). He gave prophetic dreams in symbolic form to Joseph as well as to those around him (Gen. 25:21-23). By giving the interpretation of the dreams to Joseph, God used this means to bring Joseph into a position of favor with Pharaoh.

God's desire to communicate directly with His children, providing individualized understanding and direction has not changed. He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8). He continues to speak to mankind through direct speech, dreams, and visions. We need to learn to draw near to Him in the intimate relationship that He wants to have with us and to listen for His voice, especially when we make requests of Him (Joel 2:28; John 10:27; James 4:8).

### **Part 3: How God Communicated with Moses**

Moving on from the Patriarchs, God began calling certain individuals to be prophets who would hear His messages and deliver them to man. He generally spoke to them through dreams and visions, often using symbolic imagery. His relationship with Moses, perhaps one of the first prophets, was very different, however. God spoke clearly with Moses in a “face to face” manner in which Moses was able to see the actual form of the Lord. This was seemingly because of how sincere and faithful Moses was in his relationship with God (Num. 12:7-8), which is extremely instructive to us if we desire to develop the gift of discernment and to hear the voice of God speaking to us and through us in a greater way (John 10:27)!

God called Moses to serve as a unique leader of the Israelites with his beginning task being to deliver them from Egypt and the hand of Pharaoh. When called, Moses considered himself to be insignificant and totally inadequate for such a job (Ex. 3:11), but God saw within him the characteristics He wanted. God is not concerned about man’s outward appearance or status. He is concerned about man’s heart and prefers to use those who are simple, unassuming, and humble to confound the wise and to lead His people (1 Sam. 16:7; 1 Cor. 1:26-29; 2 Cor. 4:7; 5:12). Because of what God saw in Moses’ heart, He made him both a prophet and a priest to the Israelites. As a prophet, he received God’s messages from Him and delivered them to the people. As a priest, he spoke to God on behalf of the people.

From the beginning, Moses somehow felt free to argue and to negotiate with God; yet this did not disqualify him for the role God wanted him to play. Moses argued with God about his inability to speak, and God gave him his brother Aaron as a spokesperson (Ex. 4:13-16). He argued about not being believed and God gave him miraculous signs to execute before Pharaoh (Ex. 4:1-9). Throughout the entire Exodus experience God directed Moses step by step, telling him exactly what to do in dealing with Pharaoh and executing God’s miraculous deliverance of His people from Egypt. Moses continued to argue with God all along the way (Ex. 5:22:6-9; 6:10-12), but in spite of this, He remained faithful to God.

Because of Moses’ position as prophet and priest, all the people of Israel would come to him to make inquiries of the Lord for situations that came up in their lives. They also looked to Moses to consult God for them to resolve disputes they had with others (Ex. 18:13-16).

Eventually Moses set up a Tent of Meeting outside the camp and established it as a place where the people could come and ask questions of God. The Lord would visibly descend in a cloud and talk to Moses there while all of the Israelites watched from their tents (Ex. 33:7-11). This actually became the forerunner of the Holy Place in the Tabernacle and eventually the Temple as the place where God would meet with His people. God would speak to Moses in other places, but the Tent of Meeting became the place where God would bring His manifest presence in the form of a pillar of cloud and be available to confer with man (Num. 12:4-5).

Throughout human history God has made Himself available to man. While sin cut us off from the kind of intimate communication Adam and Eve enjoyed with Him in the Garden of Eden, He has never wanted us to be without a means to receive His wisdom and help in our individual lives. The opportunity that the Israelites had in consulting with God through Moses is really the same opportunity that God makes available to us through our Mediator, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit within us (1 Tim. 2:5; Rom. 8:26; Heb. 7:25). Because these divine Mediators are unseen, our communication with God requires more faith. Nevertheless, most Christians seem to do quite well in bringing their requests to God in Jesus’ name. Where many fall short of experiencing God’s full intent for them, however, is in being silent and listening for His answers through the indwelling Holy Spirit, Who is one with our spirit (1 Cor. 6:17; John 10:27). Of course, we can only hear Him if we truly come to Him “in the spirit” rather than “in the flesh.” This requires having our sins confessed and our minds tuned to things above (Rom 8:5; Col. 3:1).

## Part 4: Moses' Encounters with the Presence of God

In our last issue we looked at how God and Moses spoke with each other very clearly and directly, as Moses found great favor in the eyes of the Lord (Ex. 33:11-12, 17). Moses' special relationship with God also included experiencing the closeness of God's presence in a number of dramatic ways, beginning with His call of Moses from the burning bush and climaxing at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 3:1-10).

After using Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, God told Moses that He wanted the nation of Israel to be His unique possession out of all the peoples of the earth. When Moses conveyed this to the elders of Israel, they agreed to obey all that God commanded them (Ex. 19:1-8). God then told Moses to prepare the people for a very special occasion in which He would come down on Mt. Sinai to speak directly to them. He seemingly wanted to demonstrate their specialness to Him and to inspire them to fear and obey Him (Ex. 19:9-13; 20:20).

On that momentous day as God descended in a dense cloud, the power of His presence was manifested through thunder, lightning, fire, smoke, the sound of a loud trumpet, and the shaking of the mountain. After Moses led the people to the foot of the mountain, giving them strict commands not to touch it, God spoke the Ten Commandments directly to them (Ex. 19:16—20:17).

That experience of God's presence and voice was so terrifying to the Israelites that they begged Moses not to let God speak to them directly again, promising to hear His words through Moses (Ex. 20:18-19). God consented to their request and never spoke directly to them again. Instead, He gave the rest of His commandments and laws for Israel to Moses, who conveyed them to the people.

After Moses had ratified the covenant with the people, God invited him to come back up the mountain with Nadab, Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel. This entire group was privileged to "see God" in some way from a distance. Since God later stated that no man could see Him and live (Ex. 33:18-29), what the group saw on the mountain that day was something less than God's full image. They were, however, able to describe a pavement of clear sapphire under His feet (Ex. 24:1-11).

God then invited Moses to come even closer, which he did, along with his personal attendant, Joshua. During this time the cloud of God's presence covered the mountain and the "glory of the Lord" rested on it. To the people below the "glory of the Lord" appeared as a consuming fire on the mountaintop (Ex. 24:12-17).

On the seventh day God called Moses alone to enter into the cloud, and he spent 40 days and 40 nights communicating with God. During this time God Himself wrote the Ten Commandments on two tablets of stone and gave Moses directions for building the Tabernacle and establishing the priesthood as the means for communication between Himself and His chosen nation (Ex. 24:16—31:18).

Moses began fulfilling these instructions by establishing the Tent of Meeting, a forerunner of the Tabernacle, as a place outside of the camp where he would meet with God. At these times a pillar of cloud would descend to the entrance of the tent to mark the presence of the Lord, and Moses and God would speak to each other as friend to friend concerning whatever matters the people would bring to him (Ex. 33:1-11).

After these already stunning personal encounters with God, Moses drew upon God's words that he had found favor in His sight and boldly asked Him to reveal Himself more fully to him, even requesting that God would show him His glory. In response, God said that He would let "His goodness" (His divine essence) pass before Moses but that no man could see His face and live. God then put Moses in a cleft in the rock and put His hand over Moses as He passed by, removing it only to allow Moses to see Him from behind (Ex. 33:12-23).

That Moses had an extraordinary encounter with God that day was evident, as when he descended from the mountain, his face glowed from having been in the presence of God's glory (Ex. 34:29-35). Amazingly, just like Moses, we are invited by God to draw near to Him with the promise that He will then draw near to us (James 4:8). Second Corinthians 3:18 even speaks of our ability to behold the glory of the Lord and to be transformed into His image "from glory to glory."

What an opportunity for intimacy with God we have!

## Part 5: God's Interaction with His People through the Tabernacle

In our last issue we focused on God's extraordinary, close-up meeting with the Israelites at Mt. Sinai. This is when God delivered the Ten Commandments as part of His covenant relationship with them as His chosen people out of all of the nations of the world. Experiencing God's presence and hearing His voice was such a terrifying experience for them that they begged Him not to speak directly to them again.

Therefore, God proceeded to speak to Moses alone to give him detailed instructions for establishing the priesthood and constructing the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle would become God's designated place for His people to interact with Him. The priests would serve as His appointed intermediaries between them and Himself (Ex. 20:19; 29:44-46).

Aaron, the brother of Moses, and his sons were chosen by God to become the first priests (Ex. 29:42-46). To serve in this position, they went through a specific consecration ceremony (Ex. 29:1-37) and were to wear specially designed garments for which God gave detailed instructions (Ex. 28).

These garments included a "breastplate of judgment" in which were two stones called the "urim" and the "thummim." The priests were able to use these stones to inquire of God regarding questions that the people wanted to ask Him. Exactly how they worked is not explained. Many feel that they were able to give yes or no answers, but the Scriptural examples of their use seem to indicate God somehow gave broader answers than that through them (Num. 27:18-21; 1 Sam. 30:7-8; Ezra 2:61-63).

The Tabernacle was divided into three sections: an outer court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. The people were only allowed access to the outer court, which surrounded the inner two chambers. Here they presented their sacrifices and offerings to the priests, who would offer them to the Lord on their behalf according to the commands of the Law (Ex. 27:9-18; 40:1-8; 33; Heb. 5:1; 8:3; 10:11).

The priests were the only ones allowed into the first inner chamber called the Holy Place. This area served as a buffer between the outer court of the common people and the even more restricted Holy of Holies. The priests maintained the Holy Place in a state of consecrated purity and worship appropriate for its proximity to the place of God's presence (Ex. 26:35; 27:21; 30:1-10; Lev. 24:3-4; Heb. 9:2, 6).

The Holy Place was separated from the Holy of Holies by an ornately woven veil. Inside the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the tablets on which God wrote the Ten Commandments and other items commemorating God's special and often miraculous care for His people (Ex. 26:33-34; Heb. 9:2-3, 7).

On top of the Ark of the Covenant was the Mercy Seat covered by two cherubim of pure gold whose outstretched wings touched each other. This was where God was enthroned on His earthly visits to the nation of Israel (1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 6:2; et.al.). Only the High Priest was allowed to enter this innermost chamber and only once a year as he made atonement for the sins of Israel. God also met with Moses there to convey to him His further instructions for the Israelites (Ex. 25:17-22; 30:6; Lev. 16:3-34; Num. 7:89; Heb. 9:3-7).

Through this earthly Tabernacle, the Old Testament saints could only have a distant connection to God, which was contingent upon their offering repeated sacrifices to pay for their sins and using consecrated priests to serve as intermediaries between them and God. In the fullness of time Jesus came to earth as a man and offered Himself as the perfect and eternal Sacrifice for our sins (Gal. 4:4-5; Heb. 9:11-12), changing forever the process for man to connect with God. This was most clearly depicted in the physical realm when at His death the veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies was severed (Mat. 27:50-51), removing the barrier between man and God.

Jesus became not only the perfect Sacrifice for our sins but also our one and only, everlasting, true High Priest, who meets us, as His children, not at the doorway of the Tabernacle but at the very right hand of the Father in heaven (Eph. 1:19-21; 1 Tim. 2:4-5; Heb. 9:24-25). Here we may come boldly in Jesus' Name to obtain mercy, grace, and help in our time of need (John 14:13-14; 16:23-24; Heb. 4:14-16). What a Savior and what love the Father has for us!

While the outer court and the Holy Place of the Tabernacle are no longer needed for the New Testament Christian, we do well to remember the need for forgiveness of sins and divine worship in approaching God even today.

## Part 6: The Manifestations of the Glory of the Lord

Our God is an interactive God desiring to be a part of our lives. We see this all through Scripture. He interacted with Adam and Eve in a very personal way as friend to friend. After sin separated Him from being able to have such direct contact with mankind, He still communicated frequently with the Patriarchs as well as with the Israelites after calling them to be a special nation to Him.

He not only spoke to them but also gave them visible evidence of His presence through the pillar of cloud that accompanied them by day and the pillar of fire by night (Ex. 13:21-22). When the Tabernacle, and later the Temple, was established as His official meeting place with them, His presence there was also indicated by a cloud by day and fire by night (Ex. 40:34-38; Num. 9:15-16; 1 Kings 8:10-11). His representation in clouds and in fire is repeated many times through Scripture (e.g., Lev. 16:2; Deut. 31:15; Ezek. 1:4; Mark 9:7).

At times God's presence in the cloud and fire seemed to become even more poignant, manifesting itself in what was referred to as the "glory of the Lord." The first mention of this occurring is in Exodus 16, when the people were complaining about not having good food to eat like they did in Egypt. On this occasion the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud (vs. 10), probably the cloud that accompanied them by day, and God spoke to Moses from it telling him what to say to the people. God appeared to them in this way on other occasions as well when they complained or rebelled against Him (Num. 14:10; 16:19, 42; 20:6).

The "glory of the Lord" also appeared to them on Mt. Sinai when God entered into His covenant relationship with Israel. On this occasion His "glory" was described as a devouring fire in the midst of the cloud that covered the mountain (Ex. 24:15-18). Then, after Aaron and Moses were consecrated as the first high priests and presented their first sacrifices to the Lord, the "glory of the Lord" again appeared to all of the people. This time fire came out of His presence and burned up the offerings (Lev. 9:23-24). The same thing occurred when Solomon's Temple was dedicated (2 Chron. 7:1-3).

Probably the most impressive appearance of the "glory of the Lord" was to Ezekiel. In this case Ezekiel saw God's presence in much more detail than is described elsewhere in connection with the "glory of the Lord." His experience began by seeing a windstorm or whirlwind accompanied by an enormous cloud with fire and lightning flashing from it and a bright light surrounding it. Ezekiel was able to describe in great detail four living creatures, who were probably cherubim, accompanying what seemed to be a portable throne of God. Over their heads was spread out a glistening crystal, dome-shaped "expanse," or platform. Above this was what seemed to resemble a throne with a man-shaped figure sitting on it, whose body from the waist up was like glowing metal with fire inside. His lower body also resembled fire. Ezekiel seemed to see this manifestation of God's presence on several occasions (Ezek. 3:23; 8:4).

The last time that Scripture records an appearance of the "glory of the Lord" is when both the angel of the Lord and the glory of the Lord came to the shepherds to announce the birth of the Messiah. They were then joined by a whole chorus of angels exulting God together on this joyous occasion (Luke 2:8-14).

Since Pentecost we, as believers, experience the presence of the Lord as being one with our spirits (1 Cor. 6:17). From this close and intimate position, God is readily available to speak to us as long as we are living "in the spirit." If we will learn to inquire of Him and to listen for His answers in this state, He will direct our paths and impart wisdom and revelation, sharing with us the very mind of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Prov. 3:5-6; Jer. 33:3; John 10:27; Eph. 1:17; 1 Cor. 2:16; Col 2:2-3). What a tremendous asset we have to be able to carry Him with us moment by moment and to work in partnership with the Living God when doing inner healing work!

## Part 7: God Communicating through the Angel of the Lord

As we continue to examine how God has communicated and revealed Himself to man through the ages, we will look now at His appearances as “the angel of the Lord,” focusing first on the nature of this representation of Himself. Most consider these manifestations, predominantly in the Old Testament, to be of the pre-incarnate Son of God. While this is possible, the angel of the Lord was seemingly who told Joseph that Jesus was being carried in Mary’s womb and who instructed Joseph after Jesus was born to take his family to Egypt (Matt. 2:13). Both instances would seem to make Him separate from Jesus.

The identification of the angel of the Lord with God Himself, however, is repeatedly clear in Scripture. Judges 2:1 equates Him with the God who entered into covenant relationship with Israel, which would seem to be Jehovah Himself. Yet in Zechariah 1:12-14 and 3:1-2 the angel of the Lord is seen as a separate entity from the Lord of Hosts and from the One with authority to rebuke Satan.

Thus, the angel of the Lord sometimes seems to represent God the Father Himself and sometimes another aspect of His divinity, which could be the second person of the Trinity, who has been the Word with the Father from the beginning (John 1:1ff). Because Scripture sometimes uses the terminology of “*an* angel of the Lord,” possibly other angels serve as special messengers of God as well while only one of them is truly a divine representative of Him.

The divine angel of the Lord should perhaps be seen as one of several modes of presentation that God can use in having direct interaction with man. This method is more personal and allows closer contact than His revelation as the “glory of the Lord,” which is much more powerful in its emanating effects. God, of course, is far more vast than any particular representation that He assumes at a particular time.

Often the angel of the Lord seemed to appear in a body visible in the physical realm. This was seemingly the case with Samson’s parents, but then He ascended in the flame of the burnt offering they made (Judges 13:20), indicating that His body was of a different nature than man’s physical body. At other times the angel of the Lord seemed to be visible only in the spiritual realm, as with Balaam, who needed his eyes opened by God in order to see Him (Num. 22:31).

Numerous people who experienced a visit from the angel of the Lord wondered at the reality that they could have had this experience and still be alive (Gen. 16:13; 32:30), since God had said that no one could see Him face-to-face and live (Gen. 16:1-13; cf. Ex. 33:20). Apparently the body in which the angel of the Lord appeared acted as somewhat of a buffer in regard to man experiencing direct contact with the fullness of God’s presence, perhaps much the way that Jesus’ body did when He was on earth. This would be in keeping with 2 Corinthians 5:1-4, which speaks of our body as a house, a tent, or even as clothing providing a covering or place of abode for our real self within.

The one recorded time that the angel of the Lord appeared without a body was when God issued His initial call to Moses. On this occasion He appeared to him as a fire, which is often associated with God’s presence, in a bush that was not consumed. Perhaps His not being in a body on this occasion was why Moses was warned not to come closer and to take off his sandals, as the ground was holy around this much more direct and powerful divine manifestation (Ex. 3:1-3).

God, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8), has always desired to communicate personally with His children. Today He is much more apt to do that through His now indwelling Holy Spirit, who is a Spirit of wisdom and revelation (Eph. 1:17). As we learn to live “in the spirit,” having our minds set on an awareness of God in our lives (Rom. 8:4-5), we will be able to hear His voice too (John 10:4).

## Part 8: God Communicating through the Angel of the Lord II

In our last issue we looked at the nature of the angel of the Lord. This time we will look at the role that this divine manifestation of God Himself played in the lives of those for whom He had concern and chose to visit in this personal way.

The first mention of the “angel of the Lord” in Scripture is His appearance to Hagar when He spoke words of encouragement and instruction to her after she had fled from her mistress Sarai’s jealous mistreatment. He wanted to reach out to her in her time of distress, and He did it in this very personal and poignant way. Hagar recognized this messenger as God Himself, calling Him “the God who sees.” In a similar way the angel of the Lord ministered to Elijah, even bringing supernatural food to him, when he was so discouraged and depleted after his flight from Jezebel (1 Kings 19:1-8).

The angel that God sent to lead the Israelites to the land that He promised them and to overcome their enemies as they went if they would obey Him (Ex. 23:2-12) was confirmed in Judges 2:1-4 to be the angel of the Lord as well. In this case He served as a Guide and a Protector for the Israelites. Psalm 34:7 indicates that the angel of the LORD encamps around everyone who fears God and delivers them, presumably from evil attack.

According to Acts 7:38, the angel of the Lord is who met with Moses on Mt. Sinai to execute God’s covenant with Israel, thus playing the role of Mediator between God and man. This foreshadowed the role of the Lord Jesus Christ, who became the Mediator of the New Covenant and the way for us to approach the Father directly in prayer without a sacrifice (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 8:6; John 14:13-14; Eph. 5:2).

The angel of the Lord is the One who halted Abraham from offering his son Isaac as a sacrifice when God put him through a heart-wrenching test (Gen. 22:11-18). He is most likely the One who wrestled with Jacob on the eve of his reunion with Esau. Though the man would not give him His name, Jacob knew that it was God, commenting that he had seen God face-to-face and had survived (Gen. 32:24-30). In these cases the angel of the Lord was intimately involved in times of testing, discipline, and the godly shaping of His children.

The angel of the Lord became a supernatural Helper to Deborah, giving her direction and help in battle and directing a curse on those who did not come to assist (Judges 4:4—5:23). He also encouraged, guided, and empowered Gideon in battle (Judges 6:11—7:23). On at least one occasion the angel of the Lord Himself seemed to battle on behalf of Israel, killing in one night 185,000 Assyrians who had come against them (2 Kings 19:35; Isa. 37:36). In these cases He enhanced human abilities and fought for His people.

Sometimes the angel of the Lord intervened to stop pertinent people from doing the wrong thing or to bring judgment when they did so. He dramatically stopped Balaam in his tracks to give him a course correction in his attitude along with stern directions concerning what to do when he was called to curse Israel (Numbers 22:21-35). He directed Elijah to intervene when the messengers of Ahaziah sought a word from Baal Zebub rather than from the Most High God (2 Kings 1). He was sent to administer judgment when His beloved servant David called for a census of the people against God’s will. In this case He brought a deadly pestilence upon Israel, killing 70,000 men (2 Sam. 24:15-17; 1 Chron. 21 see also Ps. 35:5-6).

The angel of the Lord gave direction to Joseph to take Mary as his wife and also warned him to flee to Egypt to protect the infant Jesus (Mat. 1:20-24; 2:13). Beyond this He is not mentioned much in the New Testament. This might indicate that these various roles that this divine Messenger played in the lives of His children have been replaced by the indwelling Holy Spirit, who is with us always, ready for direct interaction with us in our needs whatever they might be.



## Part 9: God Speaks through Old Testament Prophets

A major change occurred in the way that God communicated with man after His dramatic meeting with the Israelites on Mt. Sinai. They were so frightened that they did not want to hear His voice in such a direct manner again. Therefore, God promised to raise up prophets like Moses to whom He would speak directly, and then they would speak to the people on His behalf (Deut. 18:19).

Samuel was one of the first well-known prophets that God used, issuing him a dramatic, verbal call when he was just a boy. All of his prophecies were said to come true (1 Sam. 3). God directed Samuel in choosing both Saul and David as kings (1 Sam. 9:15-16; 16:1-13). Nathan and Gad were prophets that God used in David's life (2 Sam. 7:4-17; 12:1-15; 24:10-14), even though David himself was filled with the Holy Spirit from the moment of his call and God spoke directly to and through him as a prophet also (2 Sam. 23:1-7; Acts 2:30).

Elijah was another major prophet of the Lord, who performed miraculous deeds and won a dramatic showdown against the prophets of Baal. God fulfilled all of his prophecies against the house of Ahab, including his prophecy of the death of Jezebel (1 Kings 17:1-24; 18:21-46; 2 Kings 2:10; 9:33-37). Elisha then took Elijah's place and was recognized as having "the word of the Lord" (1 Kings 19:16-21; 2 Kings 3:11-12).

Isaiah was honored to receive his calling as a prophet in the setting of God's throne room in heaven where he saw himself as a man of unclean lips, but he was touched and cleansed and responded to God's call to be His messenger (Isa. 6:1-8). He prophesied to Hezekiah and successfully interceded with God concerning extending Hezekiah's life, whereupon God gave him the miraculous sign of having the shadow of the sun recede backwards ten steps (2 Kings 20:1-11).

Jeremiah's destiny as a prophet was established by God before birth. When Jeremiah argued with God about this calling, God told him not to despise his youth but to trust in His presence going with him, giving him the words to say and delivering him from harm. Through the power of the word of God in his mouth, Jeremiah was given authority over the rise and fall of nations and kingdoms (Jer. 1:4-10). Known as the weeping prophet, Jeremiah expressed much of God's grief over His erring nation and the destruction that brought as a result and shared deeply in that grief himself (Jer. 8:18—9:11; 13:17; Lam. 1:16-17; 2:11).

Ezekiel also had a dramatic calling from God in a vivid vision in which God met him on His traveling throne carried by four living beings. From this setting God commissioned him to be His spokesperson to the rebellious house of Israel and speak to them the words He would give him, whether they would listen or not. God told him that He had made him to be as hard-headed and adamant as they would be and not to fear them (Ezek. 1:1—3:11). Ezekiel was mightily filled and moved and carried by God's Spirit from place to place where God wanted him to deliver His message, often given in parables and analogies, including the dramatic bringing to life of the dry bones (Ezek. 37:1-14).

Daniel was a prophet who was highly gifted in receiving and interpreting revelation from God. Daniel referred to God as "He who reveals mysteries" (Dan. 2:29; NASB). God gave him extensive revelations concerning the future kingdoms of the world and end-times events.

The Old Testament prophets were ordinary people who had a very direct call by God. They were privileged to experience the presence of God, the power of God, and the word of God in extraordinary ways. This heightened anointing by God was often manifested by miraculous deeds being done through them. The messages they spoke were not thoughts of their own minds but came directly from the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). What they prophesied always came true (Jer. 28:9). Sometimes their messages were for all the people, sometimes for specific nations, and sometimes for a specific individual.

Hearing God's word indirectly through the prophets seemed to make it easier for the people to ignore it, however. If they did not like the message and were reluctant to obey, they often turned on the messenger, making the life of the prophets very difficult (Mat. 5:11-12; James 5:10). The situation was further complicated by self-proclaimed, false prophets, who often spoke from their own imaginations things that the people wanted to hear and that would elevate their personal esteem but did not come true (Deut. 18:21-22; Jeremiah 23:16, 25-26, 32; Ezekiel 13:2-3, 6; Luke 6:26; 2 Tim. 4:3-4).

Eventually Israel's refusal to listen to the prophets caused God to stop speaking to them altogether for about 400 years. God's overall plan was not thwarted by their unbelief, however, and this silence was broken with the arrival of John the Baptist, the prophet appointed to herald the coming of Christ Himself. The role of the prophets diminished as the Holy Spirit was given to all men, but they nevertheless held a recognized role in the New Testament, which we will look more at in our next issue.

## Part 10: God Speaks through New Testament Prophets

One of God's major ways of speaking to mankind in the Old Testament was through the prophets. Now, with the Holy Spirit given to all believers, He can speak directly to us. Nevertheless, prophets, both male and female, seem to have a role in New Testament times too.

Jesus Himself considered Himself to be a prophet, as He spoke for God (Mat. 13:57). Other prophets mentioned in the New Testament include John the Baptist (Luke 1:76), Anna (Luke 2:36), Agabus (Acts 11:26-28; 21:10-11), Saul and Barnabas (Acts 13:1-3), Judas and Silas (Acts 15:32), and the daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9). God revealed the mystery of the Gentiles being included in the family of God to the apostles and prophets of that time (Eph. 3:4-7). Paul also referred to prophecies made concerning Timothy (1 Tim. 1:18; 4:14), Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees that He would send more prophets to them (Mat. 23:34).

That God intended for prophets to have a place in the New Testament Church is clear, as prophecy is one of the gifts that He gives to New Testament saints (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:8-11; Eph. 4:11-12). He also set forth a hierarchy of positions within the Church, giving prophets the second highest position after apostles (1 Cor. 12:28). Paul urged Christians to seek prophecy as one of the best gifts (1 Cor. 14:1-5, 39) and instructed them to treat prophetic gifts with respect and not dismiss them (1 Thes. 5:20). Matthew 10:41 even speaks of a distinctive reward being given to those who receive a prophet.

The role that prophets are to play in the Church seems to be greater than just foretelling the future, though that is one way in which God uses them (Acts 11:26-28; 21:10-11). Because God has given them a heightened ability to connect with His own thoughts (1 Cor. 2:11-13), they are seemingly expected to be able to judge whether the prophetic utterances of others truly come from God and to discern the condition of a person's heart (Luke 7:39; 1 Cor. 14:24-25, 29, 37-38). Prophetic words are also intended to serve the important role of building up, teaching, edifying, and exhorting the believers in the Body of Christ, equipping them for ministry (1 Cor. 14:31; Eph. 4:11-12).

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul laid out guidelines for the operation of prophets in the local church body. They are to use their gifts in an orderly manner, allowing each one to speak in his turn while the others evaluate whether the words spoken are truly from God. If fresh revelation is received from God during the service, they are to give priority to the one who received that word (1 Cor. 14:29-33, 39-40).

Just as the gift of prophecy exists and operates within the Church today, so also does the counterfeit. From the beginning Lucifer's desire has been to become as God. Even from his fallen position he endeavors to the best of his ability to mimic whatever God can do, including imparting an imitation of God's gift of prophecy. God had created the angelic sons of God with supernatural power similar to, but lesser in strength than, His own. Even the fallen sons of God, such as Lucifer, can use this power to give transcendent insight and knowledge and to perform a certain degree of miracles (Ex. 7:11, 22; 8:7, cf. 18). Bar-Jesus was a false prophet and a magician operating in these powers (Acts 13:6-12). The end-times False Prophet will also operate in these powers (Rev. 12:11-15).

Jesus warned that these deceptive prophets would arise and lead even the elect astray with the signs and wonders they would perform (Mat. 7:15-23; 24:11, 24; Mark 13:22). We must therefore evaluate carefully the spirit behind those who give prophetic words and minister in the miraculous. According to Matthew 7:15-16, we can determine the difference by examining the fruit. This needs to go beyond the miracles that they do, however. Do the words that they speak align with the truths of the Word of God? Do their prophecies come true (Deut. 18:22; Jer. 28:9)? Do these prophets emphasize in their ministry the true Holy Spirit's role of convicting of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, and producing sanctification in believers, or is it all on performing miracles (John 14:26; 16:8, 13-14; Gal. 5:22-23)? Do they draw people to God or to themselves? Do they demonstrate behavior that honors and glorifies God?

## **Part 11: Changes in Communication Brought by Jesus Christ**

God's revelation of Himself to mankind increased greatly with the coming of Jesus Christ, who Himself revealed the very essence and nature of the Father (Heb. 1:3; John 14:7-9). Jesus also brought clearer revelation concerning the way of salvation (Gal. 3:22-26; 2 Tim. 2:8-11; 1 Peter 1:18-21) and the nature of the Church (Eph. 2:11—3:9; Co., 1:25-28).

In addition, His death on the Cross drastically changed the way man can communicate with God. Man no longer needs a sacrifice or a priest to offer it in order to come before God. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice, offered once and for all, that demolished the separation between man and God that had occurred when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden (Rom. 5:12, 17). This separation was represented by the veil in the temple between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, where God's presence would come upon the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant (Ex. 26:31-33; Heb. 9:24-26; 10:10-13). When Jesus breathed His last on the Cross, the veil was miraculously torn in two (Mark 15:37-38). Jesus Christ Himself is now our connection to God. He became our eternal high priest (Heb. 4:14; 7:23-28; 1 Tim. 2:5-6). All of us who have accepted Him as personal Savior can come boldly before God's throne to receive His help and mercy as long as we come in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:13-14; 16:23-24; Heb. 4:16; 10:19-22).

After Jesus died, rose from the grave, and ascended into heaven, He released the Holy Spirit to all believers (Acts 2:29-33; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6). The Holy Spirit indwells us and becomes one with our spirits (John 14:16; 1 Cor. 6:17). Through this union two amazing things occur. First of all, the Holy Spirit becomes intimately aware of all that is in our hearts and minds and uses this information to intercede on our behalf with the Father according to our needs, far better than we can even pray for ourselves (Rom. 8:26-27).

In addition, this union between our spirit and the Holy Spirit allows us to have the awesome privilege of tapping into the thoughts of God and the mind of Christ as He allows (1 Cor. 2:11-12, 16). Those in Satan's kingdom seek to obtain hidden knowledge through divination and many other ungodly means while God gives us a direct line straight to Him through which He is able to give us all the divine insight that we need according to His discretion.

The Holy Spirit is known as the Spirit of truth (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13), the Spirit of wisdom (Deut. 34:9; Isa. 11:2; Eph. 1:17), the Spirit of understanding (Isa. 11:2), the Spirit of counsel (Isa. 11:2), the Spirit of knowledge (Isa. 11:2), the Counselor (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7), and the Helper (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). He is thus able to play many roles to help us understand God and His ways and will for us (Ps. 119: 125; Eph. 1:7-9).

As the Counselor/Advocate, the Holy Spirit becomes like a legal assistant to us, giving us wisdom and advice for godly and successful living (Prov. 2:6-21; Eccles. 10:10; John 14:16). He also teaches us new insights from God and helps us to remember the things we have already learned from Him and His Word (John 14:26). He can also give us words to say with which no man can argue (Luke 12:11; 21:15; Acts 6:8-10).

The Holy Spirit is also able to reveal the secrets of God's thoughts and mind, including what He has given to man and what He is preparing for those who love Him (John, 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:9-13, 16) as well as other things needed for our particular life circumstances and ministry involvements. He can also give "the interpretation of dreams, explanation of enigmas and solving of difficult problems," as He did to Daniel (Dan. 5:12-14), as well as direction for ministry (Acts 13:2; 16:9-10; Gal. 2:1-2) and warnings of things to come (Acts 11:28).

Through the Holy Spirit within us, none of us is separated from knowing the will of God or having the insights we need for living a godly life and fulfilling His destiny for us. Even the most isolated believer can have communion with the indwelling Holy Spirit.

## Part 12: Communication Gifts Given by the Holy Spirit

As the Holy Spirit was released to all believers at Pentecost, He brought not only His indwelling presence as a down payment of their eternal inheritance (Rom. 8:9; Eph. 1:14), He also gave spiritual gifts to each one and continues to do so for everyone who receives salvation today. These “gifts” endow the person with a special ability for the Holy Spirit to be manifest through his life in a particular way to benefit the rest of the Body (1 Cor. 12:7-11). These gifts are freely given by God’s grace without regard to the person’s own merit (Rom. 12:6).

While the reception and use of these gifts does not depend on a person’s own abilities, their expression does depend on the degree of diligence he exerts to live in the spirit rather than the flesh (Rom. 8:5; Col. 3:1-2). This is because the Holy Spirit is united with, and works through, a person’s human spirit, which must be actively engaged at the time (1 Cor. 6:17).

Joel 2:28 foretold this release of the Holy Spirit and His gifts: “It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions” (NASB). The Holy Spirit is the Agent through which divine dreams, visions, and prophecies are expressed as well as the other gifts.

A number of these spiritual gifts involve receiving and communicating revelation and insight from God. Dreams and visions are gifts of revelation that involve receiving information from God in a visual form, either when asleep or awake. The information conveyed may be a warning (Mat. 2:12, 13, 22; 27:19), a guide or call to ministry (Acts 9:10-16; 16:9-10; Gal. 2:1-2), insight needed for oneself or another person (Mat. 1:20; 2:19-20; Acts 10:1-16; 18:9-10; Gal. 1:11-12), prophetic information (Rev. 1:1-2), guidance in inner healing, or information to help guide spiritual warfare. Receiving such revelations was considered a normal part of the early church (1 Cor. 14:26, 30).

Other gifts involving divine communication are the word of knowledge, the word of wisdom, tongues, and prophecy. The gift of the word of knowledge involves the supernatural knowing of a piece of information one would otherwise not know. The word of wisdom involves having a supernatural understanding concerning principles of successful living (1 Cor. 12:8). The gift of tongues involves speaking messages of God in another language. The gifts of exhortation, teaching, mercy, discernment of spirits, and interpretation of tongues all involve receiving divine input or guidance from God as well (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:7-10).

Prophecy is seemingly the spiritual gift that is to be desired most of all. It involves the ability to speak, by divine inspiration, messages from God that can be understood by man and profit him. These divinely given words are intended to strengthen and encourage believers and to bring comfort in times of loss or trial (1 Cor. 14:1-5). While God’s written Word always applies to all mankind, He uses the words transmitted through the gift of prophecy to speak into specific situations in a timely fashion. What encouragement He can impart through this manifestation of His presence and genuine concern for the specific individuals involved!

Prophecy not only ministers deeply to other believers who understand the role of spiritual gifts in the Church but also has a profound effect on those who are untaught in spiritual gifts and even on unbelievers. When such people hear the accuracy with which the words of prophecy describe the inner secrets of their hearts, they are usually convinced of the presence of God and drawn into repentance and worship (1 Cor. 14:24-25).

Because of the power and effectiveness of the spiritual gifts, Satan desires to counterfeit them, using demonic means to deceive even the elect (Mat. 24:24). We know from Scripture, that so-called prophetic words, and even visions, can come from one’s own imagination as well (Jer. 23:16; Ezek. 13:2-9, 17). In the last days God will say to these false prophets that He never knew them (Mat. 7:22-23).

For this reason Paul instructed the Corinthian believers to have those gifted in prophecy within the church judge each other to affirm that the words they spoke truly came from God (1 Cor. 14:29). All true prophecy comes from the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21) and not only comes true but has a significant effect on the people to whom it is given (Deut. 18:21-22; Jer. 23:29-32; 28:9; Heb. 4:12).

## Part 13: God Communicates through Angels

While this series on how God communicates with man should probably have climaxed with the last edition on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, I do not want to omit the communication role played by angels. At times God uses angels to interact with, and to communicate messages to, select individuals. According to Hebrews 13:2, this may occur without our being aware of it.

1 Peter 3:22 seems to divide unseen spiritual entities into three broad categories: angels, authorities, and powers. Rather than having ruling authority, the role of angels seems to be to serve as special attendants and messengers of God. In Scripture they are seen surrounding God's throne and will accompany Jesus when He returns to earth (Isa. 6:1-3; Dan. 7:9-10; Mat. 16:27; 24:31; 25:31; 2 Thes. 1:7; Rev. 5:11). The psalmist portrayed them as winds or flames of fire (Ps. 104:4), both of which are often associated with God's presence (Ex. 24:17; 2 Chron. 7:1; Isa. 10:16-17; Ezek. 1:4; Dan. 7:9; Zech. 2:5; Acts 2:2-3; Rev. 4:5).

Part of their role in serving God is to minister to the needs of believers (Heb. 1:14). Scripture often speaks of God's care for His people. Much of this care may be administered through angels. Angels exist in an innumerable quantity (Deut. 33:2; Dan. 7:10; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 5:11). Therefore, they can spread themselves among humankind quite broadly. Matthew 18:10 seems to imply that children each have an angel assigned to them. Just like Elisha's servant, we might be surprised if God opened our eyes to see the spiritual activity occurring around us and on our behalf (2 Kings 6:16-17).

The Old Testament records instances of angels delivering prophetic messages in visions and dreams, such as when an angel brought spiritual understanding that Daniel was seeking through fasting and prayer (Dan. 4:13-27; 10:1-21; Zech. 1:9—6:15). Angels can also take on human form, as they did when they came to Abraham to announce the birth of Isaac and to Lot to rescue him and his family from the judgment coming upon Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18—19). Though probably not in physical form, an angel guided Abraham's servant in seeking a wife for Isaac (Gen. 24:7, 40). In the New Testament we read of angels announcing the birth of Jesus (Luke 1:26; 2:13) as well as His resurrection (Luke 24:23; John 20:12). Angels brought messages to Cornelius and Paul (Acts 10:3, 7; 27:23-24) and revealed the end-time events of Revelation to John (Rev. 1:1).

Angels are also seen in Scripture bringing strength and encouragement to individuals who greatly needed it. This occurred for Elijah when he fled from Jezebel (1 Kings 19:4-8) and for Daniel when his strength was drained in seeing the mighty angelic messenger that came to him (Dan. 10:1-18). Angels also ministered to Jesus after his wilderness temptation by Satan and when He agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane over His approaching death (Mat. 4:11; Luke 22:42). Shortly after that, He indicated that He could have called 72,000 angels to rescue Him when He was arrested (Mat. 26:53).

Angels also seem to be actively involved in providing both physical and spiritual protection for those who belong to God (Gen. 48:16; Ps. 91:11-12). Perhaps you have noticed times that you have fallen much more softly than you should have, or times when a car stopped just before hitting you. These may have been times when angels were protecting you. Angels have supernatural strength and abilities which they can use in protecting us and delivering us from seemingly impossible circumstances, as they did for Lot and for Peter when he was in jail (Gen. 19:11; Acts 12:7-11).

Angels are also powerful warriors following the directions of Almighty God and entering into conflicts in both the seen and the unseen realms (Ps. 103:20). With the supernatural power that angels possess, a single angel can annihilate an entire camp of army officials (2 Chron. 32:21). Often angels are sent to execute judgment or destruction on behalf of God (Ps. 78:49). At the end of the age they will gather up those who do not truly belong in the Kingdom of God and send them into eternal punishment (Matt. 13:37-42, 49-50).

God, who is sovereign over a very large family of believers as well as the affairs of many nations, has an extremely large staff of invisible, but powerful, attendants to carry out His will. They are all around us working in many unseen ways on our behalf. As children of God, we are never alone.

## Part 14: To Whom God Communicates

We have spent many months looking at the various ways in Scripture that God has communicated with His people. In the final segment of this series I want to examine what the Bible says about who is most apt to receive communication and revelation from God.

The first important factor is the nature of our relationship with God. Psalm 25:14 (NASB) says, “The secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him.” In addition to our personal salvation, we therefore must have a proper view of God that recognizes the fullness of who He is as the divine Mastermind, Creator, Sustainer, and Ultimate Authority over all creation. At the same time He is the epitome of love, who desires to enter into an intimate union with us so that we can share in His fullness (John 1:12; 16:14-15; Eph. 3:19).

No one is greater than He. No one loves us or wants to enhance our lives more than He. When we truly see Him in this light, we will respond not only in awestruck wonder and absolute respect but also in complete love and devotion to Him (Ex. 15:11; 2 Chron. 19:7a; Mat. 22:37). This love also opens a door to God’s revelation. John 14:21 says that God will reveal Himself to the one who loves Him.

Love, in turn, brings obedience and submission to His will, which enhances our fellowship and closeness to God, opening the door further (John 14:21; 15:10; Rom. 12:1; 1 John 1:6-7). Ecclesiastes 2:26 (NET) says, “For to the one who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy.”

Anything that increases our intimacy with God helps to bring us into position to know His thoughts. Since our spirit is what becomes one with God’s Spirit at salvation, the more we are able to live in the spirit, the more we will keep the channel to His thoughts open (John 17:21; 1 Cor. 2:9-12, 16; 6:17). Living in the spirit is a matter of focusing our minds on the things of God (Rom. 8:5; Col. 3:1-2). Our minds are naturally focused on the physical realm that we live in and what we need to do to navigate it. We have to make a conscious effort to develop a mindset that includes the simultaneous awareness of the reality of God in our lives. We can only receive revelation from God in this state of intimate connection to Him.

Living in union with the Spirit of God also allows the fruit of the Spirit to be manifest in our lives, including His love (Gal. 5:22-23). Scripture says that the more our thoughts and actions flow out of His love, the more we will be able to comprehend the deeper things He wants us to know (Eph. 3:17-18).

Another quality that will increase the likelihood of our receiving communication from God is the extent to which we seek it. Proverbs 2:1-6 tell us to listen to wisdom, to incline our hearts to understanding, and to cry for discernment, seeking them as our ultimate treasure. This is when we will discover the knowledge of God and receive wisdom and understanding from Him. Jeremiah 33:3 also says that if we cry out to God, He will show us great and mysterious things of which we had no knowledge.

How we handle the insight and revelation that we receive from God may also be critical to receiving more. We must never take personal pride in what God reveals to us, as this is not the kind of person through which God chooses to work (Rom. 12:3; 1 Cor. 1:26-27; Col. 2:18-19; Prov. 16:18-19).

We must also not disseminate His secrets without careful thought as to who is qualified to receive them and will handle them in an equally discreet manner. This involves considering a person’s spiritual maturity (1 Cor. 2:6-16) and the background that he or she has to understand the level of revelation given. Sometimes revelation is meant for only a specialized group of people who need it. Sharing it with the wrong people can lead to unnecessary backlash, interfering with God’s purposes for giving the revelation as well as causing a loss of valuable time, an unnecessary expenditure of emotional energy, and perhaps even the risk of dangerous assault (Mat. 7:6).