

How God Communicates With His Messengers



SABBATH—OCTOBER 24

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Hebrews 1:1, 2; 2 Timothy 3:15–17; 2 Peter 1:18–21; Exodus 17:14.

MEMORY VERSE: “God showed these things to Jesus Christ to show to his servants. These are things that must happen soon. Then God sent his angel and showed them to John, his servant. John wrote down what God said and what Jesus showed to him. These words tell all [everything] that He saw” (Revelation 1:1, 2, WE).



On Patmos, God gave John special messages about the future.

JOHN was one of Jesus' 12 Apostles (Luke 8:51; Matthew 17:1; Matthew 26:36, 37). As we already saw, an apostle is a church leader and teacher. After Jesus went to heaven, John continued Jesus' work in Jerusalem. Before Jerusalem was destroyed (A.D. 70), John moved to the city of Ephesus. From Ephesus, John managed the churches in Asia Minor. Later, Domitian, the King of Rome, sent John to Patmos. Patmos was an island in the Aegean Sea. The Romans sent people to live there as punishment.

On Patmos, God gave John special messages about the future. These messages were not only for the seven churches in Asia Minor. The messages also were for Christians in all future ages (Revelation 1:1–3, 9–11). First, God the Father sent His message to Jesus. Then Jesus gave God's message to His angel. The angel sent the message to John. John gave the message to the people. This example shows us how God uses His messengers to communicate His messages to us.

This week, we will look at the different ways that God communicates His messages to people.

THE BIBLE AND NATURE (Hebrews 1:1, 2)

Read Hebrews 1:1, 2. Why is God so interested in talking to us? What does He tell us with the words of Jesus and in the writings of His messengers?

What does God want to say to us? Why does He want to communicate with us? God wants us to know why we are here. We live on an earth filled with sin. Sometimes awful things happen. God wants us to know why things are so bad. He wants us to know why we can hope in His love for us, too.

God uses nature to communicate His messages and Bible truth. Nature shows us God's power and caring love. King David announced, "The heavens tell about the glory [power] of God. The skies announce what his hands have made" (Psalm 19:1, ERV). Paul says, "Ever since God made the world [earth and skies], he has been showing people clearly about himself. We cannot see God. But the things that he has made show us clearly what he is like [who He is]. We can understand his great [wonderful] power that continues for ever. We can know that he is the true God. So there is no reason for anyone to say, 'We could not know about God' " (Romans 1:20, EASY).

For sure, God communicates with us in nature. He also uses nature to show us His love. A powerful example of God's amazing love for us is the way that He made our bodies to heal. "God's healing power is in all of nature. What if a tree is cut? Or what if a person breaks a bone? Right away, nature starts to repair the hurt. God made us and other living things ready to heal our own cuts and injuries. The moment a part is injured, the things that God made start to fix their own broken parts."—Ellen G. White, *Education*, page 113, adapted.

Yes, nature shows us God's power and love. But nature also can show us evil at work (read Genesis 3:14–19; Matthew 13:24–30). How can something good and beautiful also show us evil at work? God gave us the Bible and sent us Jesus to help us understand the answer. Jesus is the Living Word of God. The Bible is the Written Word of God. Both Jesus and the Bible tell us about God (John 5:39).

The Bible is a record of God's messages to us, too. The Bible tells us why we are here and God's answer to the sin problem. We can trust the Bible because its verses are God's words to us (read 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19–21).



Jesus is the Living Word of God. The Bible is the Written Word of God.

HOW GOD SENDS US HIS MESSAGES (2 Timothy 3:15–17)

We believe that the Bible is the Word of God. But what makes the Bible different from other books?

Read 2 Timothy 3:15–17 and James 1:17. What important message do these verses give us?

2 Timothy 3:16 helps us to understand that the whole Bible comes from God. (Also read 2 Peter 1:20, 21.)

But how did God make the Bible? The Holy Spirit helped God's messengers write the Bible. How did He do that? The Holy Spirit communicated God's messages to these men. So, the Holy Spirit helped them to accept and understand God's messages.

God sent His messages in dreams (Numbers 12:6; Isaiah 6:1, 8). God also communicated His messages to people who saw and heard God's truth (1 John 1:1–3). The Holy Spirit helped men to research history (Luke 1:1–3) and to choose the correct information to include in their messages. The Holy Spirit also communicated ideas and thoughts to people's minds. The messengers used their own words to communicate God's messages. But they were not allowed to change God's thoughts in any way.

How did God's messengers share His messages with people? The messengers often told them to the people (2 Peter 1:19–21). Or the messengers wrote them down for people to read (John 20:30, 31). Sometimes the messengers did special things to show the people what God wanted them to do (Ezekiel 4:1–8).

We may have many questions about how God wrote the Bible or how He communicated His words to His messengers. Why is it so important to trust that the Bible is from God, even if we don't understand fully how it was written?



The Holy Spirit communicated ideas and thoughts to people's minds.

SPOKEN MESSAGES (2 Peter 1:18–21)

The Holy Spirit helped men write the Bible. So, we can trust that the Bible is God’s Written Word. God also gave His messengers words to speak. Why can we trust that their spoken messages also came from God? Read 2 Peter 1:18-21 for the answer.

God spoke to Adam and Eve before they sinned (Genesis 2:16, 17). God also spoke to them after they sinned (Genesis 3:9–19). When God spoke to them, they understood His words completely. People heard God speak at Sinai (Exodus 20:1–20). People also heard God speak when Jesus was baptized (Matthew 3:17) and when Jesus’ clothes became bright (Matthew 17:5). We don’t always understand what people say when they talk to us. But when God talks to us, He always talks clearly. He doesn’t trick us or lie.

The Bible says, “God said to Moses, ‘I am the LORD’ ” (Exodus 6:2, ERV). Many Bible writers tell us that they heard the voice of God. Isaiah heard God speak to him (Isaiah 8:1, 11). So did Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:4, 9, 11) and Ezekiel (Ezekiel 3:16; Ezekiel 6:1). We must believe the words of these messengers about hearing God’s voice. If we doubt their honesty, we will doubt the Bible itself.

God spoke to His messengers with words they understood. In the same way, God’s messengers spoke His words to His people. Noah was a true messenger from God. Peter tells us that “Noah preached about the right way to live” (2 Peter 2:5, NIV). Noah didn’t write any part of the Bible. But he preached God’s message to the people living before the Flood. Noah’s message came from God as much as the Bible did. Many other messengers weren’t Bible writers. These messengers include Nathan, Elijah, Elisha, and John the Baptist. They didn’t write God’s messages down. They spoke their messages to God’s people.

What about Jesus? The Bible says that He “wrote on the ground with His finger” (John 8:6, NKJV). That’s the only time we see the Bible talk about Jesus writing something. But He taught and preached with power (Matthew 7:29). Some people said, “ ‘We have never heard anyone say such [these types of] amazing things!’ ” (John 7:46, ERV). So, Jesus didn’t write any books. But His messages were powerful.

God has messengers who didn’t write any part of the Bible. Why can we trust that their messages are from God?



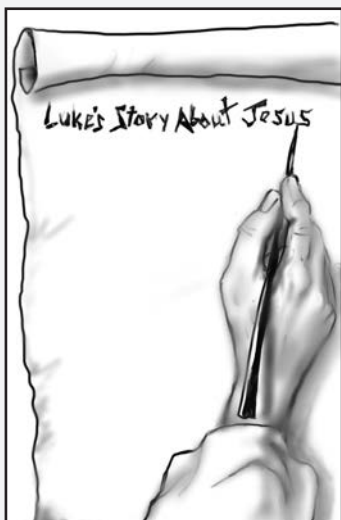
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WRITTEN MESSAGES (Exodus 17:14)

Some famous sayings and talks have changed people's lives and human history. But if these words weren't written down, no one would remember them. Or if people do remember, they may not remember the correct words or ideas. So, writing helps us remember what people say. If they write down their words, we can read what they wrote whenever we want.

Shortly after the Israelites left Egypt, they won a fight against the Amalekites. God told Moses to “ ‘write about this battle. Write these things in a book so that people will remember what happened here. And be sure to tell Joshua that I will completely destroy the Amalekites from the earth’ ” (Exodus 17:14, ERV). The Holy Spirit helped Moses to write the first five books of the Bible, the book of Job, and Psalm 90. Then the Holy Spirit helped God's messengers to write the rest of the 66 books that now are part of the Bible.

Why did God ask His messengers to write down the messages He gave them? Read Exodus 17:14; John 20:30, 31; 1 Corinthians 10:11; and Revelation 1:19 for the answer.



The first four books of the New Testament contain many sermons and teachings from Jesus.

The different books of the Bible show us the different personalities and writing skills of the men who wrote them. As we will learn next week, their different personalities and writing skills don't make some parts of the Bible more important than other parts. Yes, some parts may have more meaning for our lives and faith today. But that doesn't make one part of the Bible more holy than another part.

Sometimes Bible writers wrote God's messages after they first shared the messages with people. Sometimes an assistant wrote down the messenger's words. In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses wrote the final sermons that he preached to the Israelites before he died. The first four books of the New Testament contain many sermons and teachings from Jesus. Sometimes, New Testament writers used quotes from outside the Old Testament (Acts 17:28; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Titus 1:12). Some Bible writers also wrote down the words of Satan (Genesis 3:1–5; Matthew 4:1–11).

When we read the Bible, we should remember that the Bible writers were not perfect. So, their writings are not written in perfect language. Even so, the Bible's message is truth. We can trust forever what it says.

ACTIONS, SYMBOLS, AND PICTURE STORIES (Ezekiel 4:1–8)

The Bible is filled with symbols. Some of these symbols show Jesus' death and His work for us in heaven (Hebrews 8:1–6).

In the book of Daniel, we read about a mighty statue. The different parts of the statue show us the kingdoms and powers that will control the earth, one after another. Later, Daniel uses animals and horns to show us these same kingdoms and powers (Daniel 7 and 8). In chapter 11, Daniel uses two kings to talk about what will happen in the future. The book of Revelation uses some of these same symbols. In Revelation 13, we read about two wild animals. These animals are symbols for two powers on earth.

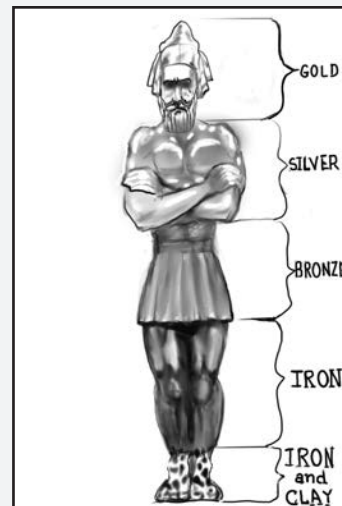
In His teachings, Jesus also used symbols. He compared Himself to many things. He named Himself the Bread of Life (John 6:35, 41–58), the Light of the World (John 8:12; John 9:5), and the True Vine (John 15:1–8). In the story about the farmer (Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23) and many other stories (Matthew 13:24–52 is one example), Jesus really was talking about His kingdom and its growth.

Why do you think God spoke to Ezekiel and, at the same time, used a special experience to help Ezekiel understand His messages (read Ezekiel 4:1–8)?

In Ezekiel 4:1–8, God told Ezekiel to lie down on his left side for 390 days. Then Ezekiel lay on his right side for 40 days. Ezekiel's left side was a symbol for how long God would punish Israel. Ezekiel's right side was a symbol for how long God would punish Judah. God asked Hosea to marry Gomer, a prostitute. A prostitute is someone who sells sex for pay. Hosea's marriage showed Israel's broken relationship with God. The Israelites were the same as a prostitute because they 'cheated' on God with other gods.

The experiences of Ezekiel and Hosea surprise us. They were meant to, and not just us, but God's people back then. At that time, much the same as today, the people refused to pay attention to God's warnings (read 2 Chronicles 36:15–21). So, God asked Ezekiel and Hosea to do surprising things to get the people's attention.

What action do you think someone could do today to warn us about the dangers of not following God? (Read Revelation 3:14–18.)



The different parts of the statue show us the kingdoms and powers that will control the earth, one after another.

ELLEN G. WHITE'S THOUGHTS ABOUT HOW GOD COMMUNICATES WITH HIS MESSENGERS

Seventh-day Adventists believe that Ellen G. White was God's messenger. Her writings, life, and work show us that God chose her to announce and write His messages. The Holy Spirit helped her write and talk in the same way He helped the Bible messengers. But Ellen White didn't believe her writings were the same as the Bible. So, what did she think about her work as God's messenger? What did she believe about how God communicated with His messengers?

First, Ellen White always believed the Bible was God's Word. The Bible shows God's truth and His plan to save sinners. God used His messengers to communicate His truth and His plan.

Second, Ellen White understood that God worked together with His messengers. God communicated His thoughts or ideas to His messengers. The messenger used his or her words to announce God's message. As Ellen White says, "God did not choose the words for His messengers. God chose the messengers. His Spirit helped them to write God's messages. The Spirit filled them with God's thoughts. . . . God combines His mind with the human mind. In this way, the words of the man are the words of God."—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, page 21, adapted.

Ellen White also wrote, "The Bible is God-given truths written in human language. The Bible shows us how God works together with people."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, page 25, adapted. God used many ways to help His messengers understand His messages. He showed them pictures in their minds. He spoke words to them and filled their minds with thoughts. Ellen White's experience with getting messages from God was much the same as the experience of the Bible writers.

Third, Ellen White understood that not all her experiences and communications were from God. "Sometimes I must talk and think about the everyday things of life. I must write letters or give information to some workers. These words and information do not come from God."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, page 39, adapted. We must remember this important idea when we read her writings, experiences, letters, and diaries. Then we will not misunderstand her words or use her writing to say something she didn't mean.

To learn more, visit <https://whiteestate.org/absg/5>.



God used many ways to help His messengers understand His messages. He showed them pictures in their minds.

BIBLE WORKER OF HOPE

In January 1906, a young Slovenian man named Albin Močnik stood on a bridge in Bremerhaven, Germany. Albin thought about jumping off the bridge and killing himself. But a stranger stopped him. The stranger introduced him to a pair of Seventh-day Adventist families. The names of the families were the Schiefers and the Banas. Both families were shoemakers.

Albin moved in with the Schiefers and the Banas. Their quiet and loving lives helped Albin to accept Jesus. In March 1906, Albin was baptized.

Soon after Albin's baptism, he went to a meeting in Friedensau. Albin didn't know that he was the first Slovenian Seventh-day Adventist when he went there. Albin decided to go to Friedensau school so that he could serve his own people better. Soon, Albin started to translate Sabbath School lessons into the Serbo-Croatian language.

In 1908, Albin finished his studies. He went to Croatia with Pastor Robert Schilliner. Albin shared the Good News about Jesus in Zagreb and in Split. Then Albin moved into Srem. Srem was a part of Croatia at that time. After that, Albin entered Serbia. There, he preached and baptized new members. He even got locked in jail for preaching.

Albin was often sick. But he never gave up. During World War I, Albin served in the army. His health was poor. He was sad that he was away from his wife and children. While he rested to get well, he printed the first Seventh-day Adventist hymnbook in the Serbo-Croatian language. He even wrote 120 songs himself.

Albin helped heal the German Seventh-day Adventist church to heal after some members tried to break it apart. Before World War I, some church members in Germany disagreed about fighting in the war. Some Germans said it was wrong. Others disagreed. Albin helped to unite the church after the war. Soon, Albin's work for God in his own country was a success. He gave the church new life. He chose new leaders. In 1925, He became the first president of the Yugoslav Union Conference.

As president, Albin did many things to help the church. In 1925, his book *Adventism* helped government leaders understand his church's beliefs. He edited the church paper *Glasnik*. He also started a school for pastors in 1931.

Albin suffered much, but his faith was strong. When he chose life and not death on that bridge in Bremerhaven, he became a Bible worker of hope. His story shows that the Good News about Jesus can change lives. Albin had the courage to share the Good News about Jesus in new places.

This story is adapted from the Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists, available at encyclopedia.adventist.org.

INSIDE Story



A stranger stopped Albin.