

Sermon 3

God's Revelation in Action

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Main Text: 2 Chronicles 20:20

“So they rose early in the morning and went out into the Wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper.”

1. God's Self-revelation in Action

When Adam and Eve sinned, they lost the privilege of open communion with God. The last open conversation with God reveals a loving God who did not let go of the human race. God's call to Adam: “Where are you?” (Gen. 3:9), reveals a yearning for communion from a loving God. Sin has changed the relationship between God and His human creatures. Notice their response to God after Adam and Eve sinned. “And they heard the sound of the Lord walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden” (Gen. 3:8). They hid themselves. Adam's response to the call out from God: “Where are you?” reveals the damaging impact of sin in the relationship between God and his human creatures. Adam responded: “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself” (Gen. 3:10). God solves the immediate need Adam expressed: “Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them” (Gen. 3:21). The clothing for Adam and Eve cost the lives of animals and implies the substitutionary death of Christ to solve the problem of human nakedness forever.

2. General Revelation at work

That yearning for communion with his human creatures, led God to open a communication channel through prophets. “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;” Hebrews 1:1,2). Jesus is presented as the climax of God's revelation. There are people who have had no access to the messages of the prophets. They only had to rely on God's general revelation through nature. Ellen White rivets this point when she states that “Nature and revelation alike testify of God's love” (SC, 9). She further elaborates concerning this general revelation of God through nature: “God is love” is written upon every opening bud, upon every spire of springing grass. The lovely birds making the air vocal with their happy songs, the delicately tinted flowers in their perfection perfuming the air, the lofty trees of the forest with their rich foliage of living green – all testify to the tender, fatherly care of our God and to His desire to make His children happy” (SC, 10). In nature we see God's revelation in action. Even though nature has been tainted by sin, God's revelation is still possible through the marvels of nature.

One of the amazing lessons from nature is how the honeybees find nectar. When one bee finds a flower that is a source of nectar, it comes to the hive. The bee comes to the center with all the bees surrounding it. It does a waggle dance while they watch every movement. The movement is a measurement of the distance to the source of nectar. What is most interesting is that the bee that does this performance to direct other bees does not go with them. It stays in the hive while they

follow the directions that were demonstrated with the dance. This points out clearly that this cannot happen by chance. In nature there is an intentional design that can be traced to the Creator God.

3. God's Special Revelation: the prophetic voice

God's revelation in action is seen as he communicates his messages to us through special revelation to prophets. God communicates to men and women who have been given the gift of prophecy by God Himself through visions. In Numbers 12:6, God presents His communication plan: "Then He said, hear now My words: if there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision." The Bible records some supernatural phenomena that occur when prophets are in vision. Daniel experiences a supernatural touch; he sees a man that people around him did not see. He moves from a position of weakness to strength because of the touch from the heavenly being (Daniel 10:4-19). Can you imagine being around a prophet while they are in vision? Ellen White comments on the way God communicated to prophets in visions: "God Himself employed pictures and symbols to represent to His prophets lessons which He would have them give to the people, and which could thus be better understood than if given in any other way. He appealed to the understanding through the sense of sight. Prophetic history was presented to Daniel and John in symbols, and these were to be represented plainly upon tables, that he who reads might understand" (2SM 319, 20).

At times, God used dreams to communicate to prophets. "The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; and he who has My word, let me speak My word faithfully" (Jeremiah 23:28). Jacob's prophetic dream in Genesis 28 is significant for understanding how God communicated to prophets through dreams. Jacob saw a ladder in his dream that connected earth and heaven. On this ladder the angels of God were moving up and down. He heard a voice from God saying "I *am* the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also, your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you." (Gen. 28:13-15). The prophetic dream was specifically about the very place where Jacob had decided to retire for the night. God was reminding him of the covenant he had made with Abraham, Isaac and now with him. In recognition to God's promise about this place, Jacob created a marker using the very stone that he used as a pillow and poured oil on it. He also named the place Bethel. He made a vow: "If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God. And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a ^[a]tenth to You." (Gen. 28:20-22).

Prophetic dreams continue into the future as God wills. Through the prophet Joel, God promises that he will continue to communicate His messages to the end of time. "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days" (Joel 2:28, 29).

As a prophet of God Ellen G. White helps us to see the continuity of God's prophetic communication. She states: "In ancient times God spoke to men by the mouth of prophets and apostles. In these days He speaks to them by the testimonies of His Spirit. There was never a time when God instructed His people more earnestly than He instructs them now concerning His will and the course that He would have them pursue" (5T 661).

The role of Ellen White's inspired messages is significantly expressed in the same section: "Warnings and reproofs are not given to the erring among Seventh-day Adventists because their lives are more blameworthy than are the lives of professed Christians of the nominal churches, nor because their example of their acts are worse than those of the Adventists who will not yield obedience to the claims of God's law, but because they have great light, and have by their profession taken their position as God's special, chosen people, having the law of God written in their hearts. They signify their loyalty to the God of heaven by yielding obedience to the laws of His government. They are God's representatives upon the earth. Any sin in them separates them from God and, in a special manner, dishonors His name by giving the enemies of His law occasion to reproach His cause and His people, whom He has called 'a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people,' that they should show forth the praises of Him that hath called them out of darkness into His marvelous light (5T 661).

Ellen White's visionary revelations were "in the form of dynamic scenes or representations of people, places, and events either past, present or future. She was shown allegorical or symbolic portrayals or illustrative stories that were not usually actual events. At times, visions were repeated until she understood the real meaning of what she was seeing" (Merlin Burt, "Revelation and Inspiration..." in *Understanding Ellen White*, p. 39).

Ellen White recalled, "I was trying to warn the brethren. I wrote day and night. In the visions of the night it was represented to me that a sword of fire was drawn over Battle Creek; and in the daytime, while my pen was in my hand, I lost consciousness, and it seemed as if this sword of flame were turning first in one direction and then in another. Disaster seemed to follow disaster, because God was dishonored in the devising of men to exalt and glorify themselves" (Lt 37, 1903, par. 6). This illustrates the representations that were given to Ellen White. She received this vision before the *Review and Herald* at Battle Creek burned down. The sword was a warning of this disaster that was about to befall this institution. She was so exhausted after pouring out her heart to warn the leaders at Battle Creek. In this letter Ellen White connects all these events to that representative vision. Ellen White's experience is similar to that of the apocalyptic prophets of the Bible who were given prophetic symbols of a macro scale.

4. Illumination as Revelation in Action

Another form of revelation is illumination. The Holy Spirit also works on the believers to lead to the understanding of truth. Jesus said: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgement because the ruler of this world is judged. I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come" (John 16:7-13).

The Holy Spirit through general and special revelation connects people to God and His plan to save humanity. Through illumination the Holy Spirit also helps the readers of the Scriptures to understand God's Word. As we spend time in the study of God's Word, the Holy Spirit also brings conviction. Therefore, this is not just an intellectual exercise, it is a spiritual exercise as well. From sin to righteousness and finally judgment. It is important to invite the Holy Spirit before the study of Scripture.

This work of the Holy Spirit is also expressed in 1 Corinthians 2:9-12: “But as it is written: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us through His Holy Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.”

This is revelation in the form of illumination in action. This text has often been misapplied to refer to only things revealed about the future. Paul in this passage is discussing mysteries of God’s plan “the deep things of God”, which God has made accessible to us through the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

God’s revelation in action reaches the unbelievers through nature. It appeals to us through the messages of the prophet and God’s special revelation. We have the Holy Spirit at work in the heart of the believer as the Word of God is studied and applied. The Holy Spirit leads to truth and understanding. May we allow God to reach us and convict us with truths from His Word.

Prayer

Lord we thank you for revealing yourself in ways that will reach everyone. Thank you for the Holy Spirit who is our guide and teacher. Please teach us and help us to reach a deeper understanding of Your Word. Help us to appreciate the messages You have sent to your prophets. May we be attentive to Your messages and apply them in our daily lives. Illuminate our minds with truth from Your word. In the name of Jesus I pray, Amen.