

# Listening to God

Read [Psalm 46:1-10](#)

## LESSON 3

### HOW GOD HAS SPOKEN

Through the ages, God has used a variety of ways to speak to His people. He apparently talked face-to-face on a daily basis with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, meeting them in the cool of the day ([Genesis 3:8](#)).

[Genesis 3:8 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>8</sup>“They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.”

After Adam and Eve disobeyed God and were expelled from the Garden, God turned to other forms of communication with His beloved creation.

There are at least eight ways in which God spoke to His people in Bible times:

1. Direct revelation
2. Dreams
3. Written words
4. Prophets
5. Circumstances
6. Angels
7. Jesus Christ
8. The Holy Spirit

### Ways He Does Not Speak

We will explore each of these eight ways briefly in this lesson, but I would like to indicate at the outset of this study that there are two ways in which God did not and does not speak to His people.

#### **1. God does not speak to His people through natural phenomena.**

That statement may seem strange to you since many of us say that we feel closer to God when we are in the great outdoors. I am a lover of God's natural world. Few things delight me as much as seeing the beauty of nature and what God has created. Having feelings about God's presence and about His creation is not the same, however, as claiming that we have a message from God through some act of nature.

We cannot observe a volcanic eruption or a hurricane, for example, and say, “Look at what God is saying.” Neither can we perceive a certain pattern in the ashes of a fireplace and conclude, “This is God’s word.” I know a man who saw a cross shape in the clouds as he was flying in a jet one day, and he concluded that it was a sign that meant he was saved. A glint in the skies does not have anything to do with confessing our sinful state, receiving God’s forgiveness, or believing in Jesus Christ and confessing Him as Savior and Lord, which is the pattern that the Bible gives for our salvation.

The broad message of God in nature is that our God is an orderly God, who operates His universe according to purpose, design, and intention. We see in nature that God loves beauty and that He provides amply for His children. We see that God has seasons of timing and a rhythm of life for all things, including each of us. We see that God is infinitely creative, and certainly, as we look at some aspects of human nature, we must conclude that God has a sense of humor. Ultimately, we see in nature that God is supreme and awesome, and that we are the work of His hands, the created and not the Creator. Nature speaks of God. That is far different from saying, “God speaks through nature a personal word to us.”

When we try to see God’s message in natural events, we are dangerously close to the practice of divination. God clearly condemns divination—the attempt to discern God’s message through such things as the pattern of tea leaves or the position of the stars. God does not speak to us through astrology or fortune-tellers. The Bible calls these practices abominations to God.

Now, we must be very clear on this point so as not to misunderstand how God may use natural means to confirm His word to us or to reveal His timing. Jesus said that we are to be astutely aware of the “**times and seasons**” that lead up to the fulfillment of God’s promises. We find a good example of this in [1 Kings 18](#). Elijah told King Ahab, “**Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain.**”

[1 Kings 18:41 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>41</sup>“**Now Elijah said to Ahab, “Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of the roar of a heavy shower.”**”

Elijah had received a message from God that the drought was ending. After Elijah said those words, he sent his servant to the top of a mountain to look toward the sea, the direction from which storms came to that area. He sent his servant seven times, and on the seventh trip, the servant reported, “**There is a cloud, as small as a man’s hand, rising out of the sea!**” Elijah perceived that God was fulfilling His word, and he sent a message to the king, “**Prepare your chariot, and go down before the rain stops you.**” (See [1 Kings 18:42–44](#))

[1 Kings 18:42-44 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>42</sup>“**So Ahab went up to eat and drink. But Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he crouched down on the earth and put his face between his knees.**”

<sup>43</sup>He said to his servant, “**Go up now, look toward the sea.**” So he went up and looked and said, “**There is nothing.**” And he said, “**Go**”

back” seven times.

<sup>44</sup>It came about at the seventh time, that he said, “Behold, a cloud as small as a man’s hand is coming up from the sea.” And he said, “Go up, say to Ahab, ‘Prepare your chariot and go down, so that the heavy shower does not stop you.’”

Note that Elijah had the word of the Lord first and he was looking for the fulfillment of that word. A natural phenomenon was used to confirm what Elijah had already heard; the word of God came first. **It’s critical that you see this difference.** Many people make a grave error in assuming that when they see some twist of a twig or a breeze from a certain direction that God is giving them a message or a sign.

## 2. God does not speak to His people through occult practices.

God’s Word speaks strongly against conjuring spirits—such as séances—and any form of magic that might attempt to give us direction for our lives. Soothsayers and seers were among the people that God clearly told His children to avoid. We are to stay far away from such things as tarot cards, Ouija boards, crystals, magic charms, and other such paraphernalia associated with the occult. They are not methods that God has used in the past, is using today, or will ever use. They are among the methods that the enemy of your soul will use to try to deceive you into believing something that is wrong, deadly wrong.

## Direct Revelation

Direct revelation may be what many people today regard as an audible voice of God. It can also be thought of as a very strong impression—one that comes unexpectedly, is absolutely clear, and is very specific.

Abraham had a direct revelation from God:

**Genesis 12:1 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup>“Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you.”

The burning bush that Moses saw while tending sheep for his father-in-law, Jethro, is another example of direct revelation. Moses saw a bush “**burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed.**” When God saw that Moses turned aside to look—in other words, when He knew He had Moses’ attention—He called to him from the midst of the bush. He gave Moses very specific instructions about how Moses was to return to Egypt and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt. (See [Exodus 3](#))

