



GOD REVEALING HIMSELF

THE GOD OF THE BIBLE MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN

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INTRODUCTION

Hosea 5:4 records a sad epitaph that could be written upon almost any tombstone, “And they have not known the LORD” (NKJV).

“Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence” (Isa. 64:1).

The souls of men cry, “Where are you, Lord?” “Come down and make Yourself known to me.” There are some things that we can learn about God from nature (Ps. 19:1; Rom. 1:20), but one cannot really KNOW the true and living God this way. God must give a special revelation of Himself. “Only as He does thus unveil Himself does He become known to man” (Willis 3).

According to Bible history, people’s names initially carried a message; e.g., “Abraham” meant “father of nations” (Gen. 17:5); “Ishmael” meant “God hears” (Gen. 16:11). Genesis five is a record of the genealogy from Seth to Noah. When put together in consecutive order, their root meanings tell God’s history with man: “[Enosh] Man is fallen; [Cainan] His mortality is fixed; [Mahalaleel] the Blessed God [Jared] comes down; [Enoch] He teaches them; [Methuselah] His death brings [Lamech] the lamenting ones [Noah] comfort” (Strong; Missler; Hedrick).

God did come down. Based on this history, we have the following outline for our study of God making Himself known to man: (1) How God Made Himself Known Before He Came Down. (2) How God Came Down to Make Himself Known; (3) How God Made Himself Known When He Came Down; and (4) How God Comforted Man By His Coming Down.

I. HOW GOD WAS KNOWN BEFORE HE CAME DOWN

God revealed Himself to our first parents. He invited them to intimate communion with Himself. Their sin broke this intimacy (Isa. 59:1), but this revelation was not broken off.

It was Cain that “went out from the presence of the Lord” (Gen. 4:16), and he did this by choice. Man had the wherewithal to know God, but he gave God up by following in the footsteps of Cain, and consequently, God gave man up (Rom. 1:21).

On the other hand, since the days of Seth (Cain’s brother), there has been a remnant “calling upon the name of the Lord” (Gen. 4:26). But how would the remnant have known God in order to call upon His name unless God made Himself known to them?

Here are some facts: everyone living before the flood potentially knew Adam or knew someone who had known him. Of the ten names given in Genesis 5 only Noah was born after Adam died. People could have enquired about their origin and their God from Adam. They could have asked Enoch. Enoch was a prophet (Jude 14). Enoch walked by “faith” (Heb. 11:5). Since “faith” comes from “hearing the Word of God,” God must have communicated to him (Rom. 10:17). “He had this testimony, that he pleased God” (Heb. 11:5) How would Enoch have known that he pleased God unless he knew God? So before the flood came, God made Himself known.

Sadly though, only eight souls were saved from the great flood. Bible history reveals that after the flood, God made Himself known by varied means; e.g., by speaking directly to the patriarchs (Job 38:1; Gen. 12:1); by plagues (Gen. 12:17); by dreams (Gen. 20:3); by prophets (Gen. 20:7); and by designated priests of God (Gen. 14:18). When God spoke, He called a man by name, “‘Jacob, Jacob.’ And (Jacob would say) ‘Here am I’” (Gen. 46:2). The idea that God would speak through a man’s thoughts or conscience is a product of religious fiction of today.

God made Himself known to man before His coming down.

II. HOW GOD CAME DOWN TO MAKE HIMSELF KNOWN

“The Blessed God comes down.” God chose to make Himself known to the increasing population of the world through one nation, Israel. To their patriarch, Abraham, God promised, “And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). And the Blessed God came down to a mountain in Sinai and spoke to this nation, Israel. “The LORD talked with you face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire” (Deut. 5:4). Isaiah refers to this as “When You did awesome things for which we did not look, You [God] came down, The mountains shook at

Your presence” (Isa. 64:3).

“He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel” (Ps. 103:7). Isaiah said that this was unexpected; i.e., they were “not looking” for this. Man by his imaginations had not anticipated it. Isaiah asserts, “For since the beginning of the world Men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, Nor has the eye seen any God besides You, Who acts for the one who waits for Him” (Isa. 64:4).

God’s coming down was so awesome that Israel begged God to speak only to Moses and let Moses relay God’s message to them (Deut. 5:27). The Ten Commandments was at first delivered orally by God and then was written on tables of stone by the finger of God (2 Cor. 3:3; Deut. 9:10). God commanded Moses to “write it in a book” (Ex. 17:14; Ex. 34:27). He and the prophets that followed him did this (Num. 12:6). These prophets made God known by the guidance of God’s Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21). During this time God added to the original revelation according to His pleasure (Deut. 29:1; 2 Chr. 29:25-28; Eph. 1:9). Although God did add, He specifically forbade man to “add to” or “diminish from” what He made known (Deut. 4:2). This book made God known to the nation and world for almost fifteen hundred years.

At the end of this time, God chose to come down to make Himself known in a quieter way than the shaking of mountains. He came as the Second in the Godhead (Col. 2:9), a human baby born of a virgin and placed in a manger (Jn. 1:1-3; Gal. 4:4). His coming was prophesied, “the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” Says the Lord of hosts” (Mal. 3:1). “Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:5-7 RSV). “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh” (1 Tm. 3:16).

The advent of God upon Mt. Sinai had been a surprise to Israel and the world as Isaiah had so declared in his chapter 64. This is applied by the apostle Paul to God’s coming down as Jesus: “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’” (1 Cor. 2:9). Man could not know by the human senses about Jesus any more than he could about the blessings offered to Israel.

Even though man’s “eyes, ears, and heart” had not perceived, nevertheless,

Paul affirms that “God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit.” Who are the “us”? The context affirms that the “us” referred not to man in general but to Paul and his preaching brethren (i.e., the apostles and prophets) to whom the Spirit had revealed God’s plan.

Just as God had used the Holy Spirit after His first “coming down”, He again uses the ministry of His Holy Spirit in making Himself known. Before His crucifixion Jesus promised the Spirit would come and guide His apostles in “all truth” and “whatever [the Holy Spirit] hears He will speak” (Jn. 16:13).

Paul writes, “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. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Cor. 2:12-13). This passage teaches that God helped Paul convey the knowledge of God to us by the Holy Spirit selecting from Paul’s vocabulary the words so that the message would not be by any man’s wisdom but truly by the wisdom of God. So we have what is called “verbal inspiration”; i.e., words chosen by the Spirit of God. Paul asserts in verse sixteen, “we have the mind of Christ.” It is as if Paul says, “Listen to me, Paul, as if you were hearing God speak.”

Whereas the revelation at Sinai was written initially on tables of stone, so the revelation from Jesus Christ was initially written on the fleshly tables of the heart of the apostles and prophets by God’s Spirit (2 Cor. 3:3; Heb. 8:10-13). Like Moses, they in turn wrote it down and the resulting book, the New Testament, is just as authoritative as the Holy Spirit’s words had been from their lips. Second Thessalonians 2:15 states, “So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions [‘precepts’, Strong 3862] which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter” (RSV).

God came down on Sinai; then, He came down in the flesh of man. In both cases, God’s Spirit made God known through appointed men.

III. HOW GOD MADE HIMSELF KNOWN WHEN HE CAME DOWN

“He teaches them.” ‘Then the Lord said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them.'" (Ex. 24:12). Leviticus states, “And that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes

which the Lord has spoken to them by the hand of Moses” (Lev. 10:11). God made Himself known through His teaching.

Jesus came teaching. “This man [Nicodemus] came to Jesus by night and said to Him, ‘Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him’” (Jn. 3:2).

The Holy Spirit came teaching. “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things” (Jn. 14:26). The apostles, guided by God’s Spirit, were teachers for God (2 Tm. 1:11). Jesus commanded them, “Go ye into all the world and teach all nations, baptizing them . . . , teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Mt. 28:19 KJV).

The teachings of God are described in Psalms 19:7-9. “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul” (verse 7) introduces the descriptions. The word “law” appears to be generic for “instruction, direction, put straight, guide” (Clarke, 281). In other words, the “teachings” of the Lord are “perfect, converting the soul.” The word (torah in Hebrew; nomos in Greek) is used for both Testaments (Jn. 10:34; 12:34; Rom. 8:2). The Old Testament “Teachings” or “Law” was to last until Jesus came down (Gal. 3:19). Then the New Testament “Law” or “Teachings” of Christ would come into force (Heb. 9:15-17).

“God’s teachings” are “perfect”; i.e., “entire; integrity, a truth-without blemish, complete” (Strong 8549). It is entire and complete for its purpose. David did not have the complete Old Testament Law nor the New Testament Law, but what he did have was “perfect: complete” for David’s generation. We now have the complete “teachings” of God in the Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Cor. 13:10). Man is not to add to or take away from it. “Everyone who goes beyond the limits of the Teaching of the Christ has failed to find God; the man who keeps to that Teaching-- he has found both the Father and the Son” (2 Jn. 9 TCNT).

The teachings’ design is to “convert” the soul. That is, it is “to turn back” the soul to God (Strong 7725). “(This Jesus) God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance [i.e., ‘turning back’] to Israel and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31).

The first description of the teachings is His “testimony is sure, making wise the simple” (Ps. 19:7). God teaches by giving “testimony” which means “witness; beyond; forward” (Clarke 282). God’s “testimony” goes beyond their immediate

application. God made Himself known in the Old Testament through types and prophecies of Christ and His kingdom. God is all knowing, knowing the future as well as past and present. He recorded selected events as models for the benefit of people “beyond” the ones living them. “Now all these things happened to them as examples (“pattern; model” Strong 5179), and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Cor. 10:11).

The approved examples of the New Testament also serve as wise testimony to us of what pleases God concerning the church as to its organization, worship, and work (1 Cor. 11:1; 3 Jn. 11). If we imitate these examples, we have the “testimony” that we are pleasing to God, just as Enoch did. If we digress, we have the “testimony” of Cain.

God’s testimony is sure; i.e., “faithful; incontestable; reliable” (Clarke 282). God is Faithful (1 Cor. 10:13). His history book is reliable. His prophecies are true. His patterns are incontestable.

Next, Psalms 19 declares that “the statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart” (verse 8). God teaches by “statutes” which mean that “He visits; cares; takes notice of, appoints to a charge” (Clarke 282). God “visited” man. In the New Testament it is written, “Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us” (Lk. 1:78). God “visits” man by giving man what he needs (Jn. 3:16). Christians are to “visit the fatherless and the widows” (Jas. 1:27). This is not just a passing “hello” visit. And so it is that God provided for our eternal salvation and “all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him” (2 Pet. 1:3). Knowing with confidence that we know what pleases God, our hearts can rejoice with joy.

The next description is “The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes” (Ps. 19:8). God is made known by his “giving orders” (Clarke 282). In the New Testament it is written, “And if there is any other commandment, all are summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Rom. 13:9). God’s orders are pure as God is pure and holy (1 Pet. 1:15). God’s commandments give light for our walk in this life (Ps. 119:105). Without revelation man is blind and in darkness; but with written revelation he can see. His eyes are enlightened.

Next, “The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever” (Ps. 19:9). God teaches an attitude of “fear”. This is “what God’s reverence demands, effects, and maintains; so it is the revealed way in which God is to be feared” (Keil 287).

Hebrews teaches “let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Heb. 12:28). Although fiction writers take liberty with God, God is an awesome God. The next time in worship, for example, remember this. Our “Fear” is to be clean, “spotless; unadulterated” (Clarke 282). Can man mix, add or take away from God’s authorized worship and it still be unadulterated and clean? Can we be disrespectful in service and yet be acceptable? This reverential fear is to last one a lifetime. It is perpetual and “must be carried all through life” (Clarke 282).

The last description given is, “The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether” (Ps. 19:9). God teaches man by “judgments.” The Hebrew word is defined as “judging, regulating, and disposing” (Clarke 282). The apostle Paul preaches to Felix; “as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid” (Acts 24:25). God is the “Judge.” Unlike earthly judiciaries His decisions rest on both Truth and Righteousness. Truth is revealed to man through the Bible by the Holy Spirit (Jn. 17:17). Jesus was judged by righteousness even as we are and will be. Jesus wanted to be baptized but John tried to prevent Him, “But Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness’” (Mt. 3:15). Obeying God’s teachings is righteousness. This entire book, the Bible, and our life, is what we will be judged by (Rev. 20:12).

God came down to teach, to testify, to visit, to command, to demand reverence, and to judge.

IV. HOW GOD COMFORTED MAN BY HIS COMING DOWN.

“His death brings the lamenting ones rest and comfort.” God foreshadowed His comfort of man when He made tunics from dead animal/s to cover our first parents (Gen. 3:21). The prophet Abraham said to his son, “God will provide for Himself the Lamb for a burnt offering” (Gen. 22:8). John said of Jesus, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (Jn. 1:29). The promise of rest is “when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels” (2 Thes. 1:7).

Jesus identified the ones that His death benefits: “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (Jn. 17:3). The conditional promise of eternal life is with those “knowing” God and “knowing” Jesus; i.e., to “know (absolutely)” and to “perceive, be resolved, understand” (Strong 1097).

God expects man to know God by understanding Him through the teachings given by His coming down. “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true... This is the true God, and eternal life” (1 Jn. 5:20).

Can we understand the teachings of God of the Bible? Indeed, our “comforting” eternal life depends on it!

God expects man to seek this understanding. “Seek the Lord” (Ps. 105:4). In Proverbs 2:2-5 one reads “So that you incline your ear to wisdom, And apply your heart to understanding; Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding, If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will understand the fear of the Lord, And find the knowledge of God.”

The apostle writes, “How that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets” (Eph. 3:3-5).

This lesson began where both Isaiah and Paul said that man could not know God just by his senses. But notice how the wise man tells us to use the senses God created in us.

Firstly, the seeker is to truly listen to God’s Word; we must hear with our heart and mind as well as with the ear. Secondly, one is to cry for discernment or comprehension. It is interesting that the word “cry” is sometimes translated “read” (Strong 7151). “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). Thirdly, one is to seek and search after understanding as a treasure and “then” he will understand and find the knowledge of God! “More to be desired are [God’s teaching] than gold, Yea, than much fine gold”; it is “sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb” (Ps. 19:10). It is a “pearl of great price” (Mt. 13:46). Jesus said, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Mt. 7:7). The New Testament equates this as having a “love for the truth” (2 Thes. 2:10).

God expects the seeker to obey His teachings given by His coming down.

As Psalms 19 ends, one reads of God's teachings: "...and in keeping of them there is great reward" (Ps. 19:11). Strong defines "keeping" as "take heed" and "observe" (Strong 8104). The seeker must take heed; he must observe. He must obey.

The audience on the day of Pentecost pleaded, "What shall we do?" The Holy Spirit answered through Peter, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38). "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them" (Acts 2:41). We have God's testimony that those who obeyed His teachings were pleasing to Him because He added them to the apostles. Then what did they do? They continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching because this was God's teaching.

Jesus said, "He who has my commandments and obeys them--he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will clearly reveal myself to him"; "If anyone loves me," replied Jesus, "he will obey my teaching; and my Father will love him"; "If you obey my commands, you will continue in my love" (Jn. 14:21, 23; 15:10 -WNT).

SUMMARY

God made Himself known to man through the ages even before He came down. He came down and revealed His teachings to Moses and prophets in sundry times and divers manners with the Old Testament. Finally He came down and revealed Himself to man by Jesus who in turn commissioned His apostles and prophets to teach man with guidance from His Holy Spirit. Jesus died to save us from our sins and comfort us with the hope of Eternal Life through the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ.

- Gaylon West delivered as lecture in 2007 at Florida School of Preaching, Lakeland, Florida

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Patriarchs before the flood

NAME (Hebrew/English)	STRONG'S NUMBERS AND DEFINITIONS	MEANING
Haadam (Adam)	0121 The first man 0120 Ruddy; human 0119 To show blood (red)	Man
Sheth (Seth)	8352 Put 7896 Place	Appointed
Enosh (Enos)	0583 Son of Sheth 0582 A mortal 0605 To be frail, feeble	Mortal
Kenan (Cainan)	7018 Fixed 7064 A nest 7077 To erect	Habitation
Mahalaleel	4111 Praise of God 4110 Fame 0410 Strength; mighty 0352 Strength 0193 Be strong 1984 Be clear; shine; make a show; rave	The blessed God
Yered (Jared)	3382 A descent 3381 To descend	Shall come down
Chanok (Enoch)	2585 Initiate 2596 To narrow; to discipline	Teaching
Methushelach (Methuselah)	4968 Man of a dart 4962 An adult 4970 Extent; when 7973 Missile of attack 7971 To send away, send for, or send out	His death shall bring
Lemek (Lamech)	3929 (1) Son of Methusael 3929 (2) Son of Methuselah	Captives

Noach (Noah)	5146 Rest 5118 Quiet 5117 To rest	Comfort
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