

Why You May Not Recognize God Speaking to You

Have you ever taken a moment to consider *how* God communicated to individuals in the pages of the Bible? Now, I'm not talking about the specific content of these heavenly messages, but the actual means of their conveyance. How did the Lord functionally reveal what He wanted to be known?

I know that this is something that I've desired to understand over the last few years. During this wonderful season of growth, I've read through much of the Old Testament – trying to gain insight into previously unrecognized patterns. I began actively exploring the various corners of the inspired biblical narratives to order to comprehend God's "means" of communication.

When I bring this discussion up to other Spirit-filled believers, they often say things like, *"Well, God just spoke to the prophets. They just heard His voice."* Speech undoubtedly holds great significance in the Bible, but I've also learned that there are also other means of transmission in the pages of the text.

It is true that the prophetic utterances were often conveyed through sound, but sometimes God communicated to His servants through pictures and visual expressions. Divine guidance certainly isn't limited to the "ear." Symbolic, visceral imagery was also a dimension of heaven's language.

An example of this kind of visual exchange is demonstrated in the dynamic encounters of Jeremiah. The future of his troubled nation was being revealed through the unique depictions of an *"almond tree"* and a *"boiling pot."*

"The word of the Lord came to me: 'What do you see, Jeremiah?' 'I see the branch of an almond tree,' I replied.

The Lord said to me, 'You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled.' he word of the Lord came to me again: 'What do you see?' 'I see a pot that is boiling,' I answered. 'It is tilting toward us from the north'" (Jeremiah 1:11-13).

Jeremiah ultimately saw a number of things that conveyed God's purposes for Israel. In one instance, he caught a glimpse of a *"ruined belt"* that represented the backslidden nation (Jeremiah 13:6-11). In another instance, God brought intense revelation through a skillful potter, forming pots (Jeremiah 18:1-6).

Others observed similar things that enabled the disclosure of divine purpose. For example, at the time of his commissioning, Ezekiel had a vision of a vast *"storm"* rising from the north that, along with fierce creatures, was filled with the voice of God (Ezekiel 1). Later, he was shown a *"valley of dry bones"* that would *"come to life"* under his anointed decree (Ezekiel 37:1-14). Each of these depictions revealed what the Lord desired.

In other portions of Scripture, there were similar outworkings. Amos saw a *"plumb line"* that revealed God's intentions for the people of God (Amos 7:7-8). He also witnessed a *"basket of ripe fruit"* (Amos 8:1-2) that revealed what was ahead. Seemingly normal images began to reveal extraordinary realities as God spoke through them.

The prophet Zechariah also witnessed incredible things. The Lord revealed: a man among the myrtle trees (Zechariah 1:8-10), four horns (Zechariah 1:18-21), a man with a measuring line (Zechariah 2:1-2), a solid gold lamp stand with seven lamps (Zechariah 4:1-6), a flying scroll (Zechariah 5:1-2), a basket (Zechariah 5:5-8), and four chariots (Zechariah 6:1-5). Zechariah had some of the more unusual visionary experiences.

As the Spirit fell upon the disciples in the New Testament, they *"saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them"* (Acts 2:3). This became a visual affirmation of the seminal appearances of God in the Old Testament. Fire was witnessed when Moses encountered the Lord on the mountain (Exodus 19:17-19) and when the Tabernacle was completed (Numbers 9:15-16). Fire was also demonstrated when Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:24). It was a visual marker of something significant.

Through a visual experience, Peter caught a glimpse of God's heart for nations. The intense imagery of a *"sheet filled with unclean animals"* demonstrated that God was going to redeem the non-Jewish people (Acts 10:9-16). It was also recounted that, under the unction of the Holy Spirit, the prophet Agabus wrapped his hands and feet with Paul's belt. This was visually communicating to all who gathered that the Apostle had a grim future in Jerusalem (Acts 21:10-11).

Through pictures and visual depictions, God sometimes revealed His distinct purposes in the hearts and minds of men. Those who were in a covenant relationship with the Lord were literally being transformed by what they envisioned.

There are incredible lessons in all of this. Throughout Scripture, God often revealed things through an unique line of vision. Are you genuinely open to guidance that might come through the realm of sight? Sometimes an image best tells the story. After all, a picture is worth a thousand words.

"Then I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me" (Revelation 1:12).

J.D. King is the director of the World Revival Network and associate pastor for World Revival Church.