

**The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 1 – “Of the Holy Scripture”, Message # 4 –
“To Declare His Will unto His Church”, Presented in the Adult Sunday
School Class, by Pastor Paul Rendall on July 14th, 2019.**

Paragraph 1 – The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience⁽¹⁾, although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and His will which is necessary unto salvation⁽²⁾. Therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in divers manners to reveal himself, and to declare that, His will, unto his church⁽³⁾; and afterward for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan, and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing; which maketh the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary, those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.⁽⁴⁾

1) 2nd Timothy 3: 15-17; Isaiah 8: 20; Luke 16: 29 and 31; Ephesians 2 :20; 2) Romans 1: 19-21; 2: 14-15; Psalm 19: 1-3; 3) Hebrews 1: 1 4) Proverbs 22: 19-21; Romans 15: 4; 2nd Peter 1:1 9-20

Hebrews 1: 1 and 2 – “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.”

Well, we have seen in past studies that the light of nature and the works of creation and providence are not sufficient by themselves to give that knowledge of God and His will which is necessary unto salvation; that it takes the Scripture, the word of God, to inform the mind of man of God's righteousness, His perfect and holy will for man, to show man his fallenness and sinfulness, and show him his need to believe in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that a person may be saved. But we saw from Psalm 19: 7-12, that the law of the Lord is perfect for this. It is perfect for converting the soul through and by the power of the Holy Spirit, according to the purpose of God. And so today we want to remind ourselves that it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in divers ways, during Old Testament times, to reveal Himself and to declare His will unto His Church. In New Testament times, Christ having come and God having spoken to us by His Son, and it was our Lord Jesus who commissioned His apostles and those authorized by them, to commit all of His will for His New Testament church, to writing. And thus we have the complete canonized Scriptures.

1st – The various ways that God spoke and revealed Himself in Old Testament times.

(a) He spoke to them by a literal audible voice and sometimes made an appearance while He spoke in a Theophanic form. (That is, God taking the form of a man, which is a Prophetic precursor to the Incarnation of the Son of God.

Genesis 2: 15-17 – “Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.” “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that eat of it you shall surely die.’”

Genesis 3: 8-11 – “And they heard the sound of the Lord God 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.” “Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ “So he said, ‘I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.’ “And He said, ‘Who told you that you were naked?’ “Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?”

Now, you can see that this is how God communicated with the first man and the first woman in the Garden of Eden. He spoke with them verbally, and He apparently even manifested Himself to them in the physical form of a man because it says that they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. He was He was looking for them, He was calling to them so that they might know His great concern for them. They were hiding because they were afraid. They were hiding because they had disobeyed the one good commandment which God had given to them to keep, in order that their original righteousness would be preserved. But I want you see that God communicated to them by means of an actual audible voice. He had communicated to them before, what His will was; to keep the commandment that He had given them. They did not do that, they broke His commandment and plunged our whole race into sin and misery through their disobedience. But God would now give them the promise of eternal life in Genesis 3: 15 when He audibly spoke to the serpent saying – “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”

Now, how do we know all of this? We know it because we have the Old Testament Scriptures in our hands. We have it because it was revealed as it says in 2nd Peter 1: 21 – “For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” We can apply it this way in regard to the 1st man Adam. What was revealed to Adam and others in the Patriarchal times, in a verbal conversation was literally real, not a dream or just something in their mind conveyed to them, and they wrote it down, and passed it on, from one holy man to another, eventually to become the individual books which over the time of the first 3600 years of human history; eventually becoming the Old Testament Scriptures. And this gathering together of the books of the Old Testament happened at God’s time in their formation together to become the Old Testament. Because, when what had been heard from God audibly and verbally was passed down from them, to another prophet such as Moses, he wrote it down by the inspiration of God, and it became forever fixed in this written form; that this was the truth concerning God and the history of man, and their responses to His revealing His will to them. The Scriptures being written down by holy men of God was done at God’s bidding, not theirs, and it was His working to permanently establish His word as His truth and His will as what was, and is, to be regarded by all men, everywhere.

b. God spoke and made His will known to his prophets in visions and dreams.

Numbers chapter 12, verses 5-8 – “Then the Lord came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam.” “And they both went forward.” “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; I speak to him in a dream.’ “Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house.” “I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the Lord.” “Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?”

We can see here several other ways that the Lord made Himself known besides direct audible verbal conversation being compared here with the way that God spoke to Moses. God Himself

says that He spoke to Moses even plainly, and not in dark sayings. He spoke to Him face to face, I believe in a literal sense. “The Lord came down,” it says in verse 5, “and stood in the door of the tabernacle...” This was not common in the experience of all of the Old Testament prophets, to speak with and to the Lord in audible conversation, beholding His form, but it was a very great privilege which was given to some. Moses was one, Abraham was another. The vast majority of the other prophets received their revelations in a vision, or in a dream. And some of these wrote down their vision or dream, according to the will of God, and so we have it as books in the Old Testament Scriptures.

(c) In New Testament Apostolic times, God spoke and made His will known to the Church by means of putting his prophet (Peter) in a trance, leading to his receiving being the word of God in visionary form.

Acts 10: 9-20 – “The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour.” “Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth.” “In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.” “And a voice came to him, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’” “But Peter said, ‘Not so, Lord!’” “For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.” “And a voice spoke to him again the second time, ‘What God has cleansed you must not call common.’” “This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.” “Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon’s house, and stood before the gate.” “And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there.”

“While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, ‘Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them.’”

You can see here how the Lord’s will concerning His purpose to bring the Gentiles into the Church of Jesus Christ was fulfilled here at this time. Peter fell into a trance by the will of God and he saw heaven opened in a visionary way, and he saw an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and being let down to the earth.” The voice from heaven tells him that he must arise and eat. And Peter attempts to argue with this saying that he had never eaten anything common or unclean. And all of this was down three times. This greatly perplexed Peter. What was happening? God the Holy Spirit made it plain to him after the vision had finished in his conscious experience, by saying to him in an audible voice – “Three men are seeking you.” “Arise and go down with them.” And do not doubt that this is my will, for I have sent these men to you.”

This is the way that God revealed His will that the Gentiles were to have the gospel preached to them (to Cornelius and his family as the first representatives) and by the Spirit’s working and power, they would believe the gospel and be saved, and brought into the Christ’s church and the local church there would be formed composed of Jews and Gentiles. The common, that is these Gentile believers were not to be called unclean, because God had revealed the truth of the matter to Peter, and it came to be written down by Luke, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and became a part of the New Testament canon of Scripture.

This, then, was the way that God spoke to the fathers by the prophets. He spoke to them face to face. He spoke to them in dreams and visions. He sometimes even put them into a trance and gave them a vision. But eventually, someone, also inspired by the Holy Spirit wrote these things down for our instruction. Those who received the vision received instruction concerning God's will, and in their writing it down, we receive instruction on what is God's will in all of its particulars. We learn what the will of God is for our lives by reading the Scriptures, abiding in the Scriptures, and walking in faith and obedience in relation to the Scriptures.