



Lifeline to the Lord

Lesson Overview

1. Brainstorm

How can we communicate with people we do and will not see?

2. Watch a Video

Watch the first 10 minutes or so of What the Bible Is at bitly.com/WhatTheBibleIs (1hr 19min 20sec).

3. Discuss

Discuss how God communicates with us. p.2

New Church Concept Written Language

The Lord was pleased to be born on our planet...for the sake of the Word, which was able on our planet to be set down in writing. Then, having been written, it could be disseminated to all parts of the planet, and once it had been disseminated it could be preserved for all future generations. In this way the truth that God had become Man could be made plain, even to all in the next life. *Arcana Coelestia* 9350-9351

FaithBuilder 2 | Lesson 24 | Word

Brainstorm

- What is the best way to get a message to someone you cannot contact in person—for example a being in outer space?

For about 200 years, scientists have looked for ways to reach out to aliens. People have suggested making huge shaped fire-filled ditches, patterns in forests, and in recent years they have actually sent out sound waves and pictures. There have been no responses so far. People are realizing this is a very complex issue.

- How could you get a message to someone in the future?

Today some texting services will deliver messages up to 25 years after they are sent—but this only works if people have the same equipment and programs in 25 years. In the past, books were the only way to speak to people in the future, so those who wanted to share their thoughts wrote them down and published them. The saying “publish or perish” expresses the idea that if you don’t publish your thoughts, they disappear when you die.

- So how does God communicate with people?

The Lord is with us at every step. He reveals or discloses Himself through the Word. He provided that the human race would develop written language so that He could reveal Himself in this way.

Watch a Video

Watch the first 10 minutes or so of *What the Bible Is—Swedenborg and Life* at bitly.com/WhatTheBibleIs (1hr 19min 20sec). (Enter the bitly link in the web browser bar at the top of your screen.) The first part of the video introduces the idea that God has revealed Himself to humankind in various ways throughout the history of the human race. The overview starts with God’s revelation in most ancient times and ends with the most recent revelation for the New Church.

Discuss

Choose questions for discussion.

1. Why doesn’t God make his presence obvious to people today—for example by communicating directly with us, as He did in ancient times?
2. Why is it impossible to know what God is like by looking at the world around you?
3. Is truth complicated? Why do we need to know so much about the Word to understand it?

New Church Concept We know Nothing...

On our own we know nothing of heavenly and spiritual affairs, so we learn about them from Divine revelation, which is the Word. *Secrets of Heaven* 3380

From earthly light, we know nothing about the Lord, heaven and hell, our life after death, or the divine truths that are essential for our spiritual and eternal life.... For this reason there has been a revelation in every era. *White Horse* 6

God With Us

Jehovah God came down as the divine truth, which is the Word.... "Jehovah" means divine love or divine goodness; "God" means divine wisdom or divine truth. Jehovah God came down as divine truth, which is the Word:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by it, and nothing that was made came about without it. And the Word became flesh and lived among us. (John 1:1, 3, 14)

"The Word" means divine truth because the Word is divine truth itself. It was dictated by Jehovah himself, and what Jehovah dictates is pure divine truth - it cannot be anything else. Nevertheless, because it passed all the way through the heavens into the world, it became adapted to angels in heaven and also to people in the world. As a result, in the Word there is a spiritual meaning in which divine truth is in the light and there is an earthly meaning in which divine truth is in shadow. See *True Christianity* 85

- Why might God *not* want us to understand everything in the Word as soon as we read it? (e.g. We would lose our freedom to accept or reject Him—and the Lord values this. It protects the Word from people who want to harm it, and in doing so harming themselves.)
- The Lord always makes sure that essential ideas about how we should treat others and what we should do to get to heaven are easy to see in the Word. They are like a person's hands and face that are not covered with clothes. What important messages are in the following verses?

“What does the Lord require of you, but to love mercy, do justly, and walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Matthew 22:37-39

“Do to others as you would have them do to you.” Luke 6:31

- What are some of the ways God has communicated with the human race over time? (Most Ancient Church—direct revelation; Ancient Church—correspondences; Jewish church—rituals symbolic of Divine things; God Himself came; Revelation for the New Church)

A Magnificent Temple

One day there appeared to me a magnificent temple. The roof was shaped like a crown. The walls were continuous windows of crystal clear glass. The door was made of a pearly substance. On the southwest side of the interior there was a large raised pulpit, on top of which, to the right, the Word lay open, surrounded by a sphere of light so bright that it engulfed the whole raised area of the pulpit and made it shine. In the middle of the temple there was a sanctuary, with a veil at the front of it that was now lifted up. There an angel guardian, made out of gold, stood with a sword moving this way and that in its hand. The temple means the new church.

The door made of a pearly substance means our entry into the new church. The crystal clear windows mean the truths that enlighten the new church. The pulpit means its priesthood and preaching. The Word that lay open on the pulpit, lighting up the raised area of it, indicates that the Word's inner meaning, which is spiritual, has been revealed. The sanctuary in the middle of the temple means the partnership between the new church and the heaven of angels. The angel guardian made out of gold, standing in the sanctuary, means the literal meaning of the Word. The sword moving back and forth in its hand means that the literal sense can be turned this way and that, provided the purpose is to apply it to some truth. The fact that the veil in front of the angel guardian was lifted up means that the Word has now been opened to view.

As I came closer to the building, I saw an inscription above the door: Now It Is Allowed, which means that we are now allowed to use our intellect to explore the mysteries of faith. See *True Christianity* 508