



GOD HAS SPOKEN

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Good morning and welcome to Let the Bible Speak. We value your time and are thankful you're here to study the Word of the Lord. Speaking of which: what is the "WORD OF THE LORD"? Does God speak to us and if so, how does He do so? Does He reveal His mind and will to the individual or has He spoken to us all through another channel? That will be the question before us in our study today.

I want to turn our attention to the beginning of the letter to the Hebrews. We'll read now from Hebrews chapter 1, verses 1 and 2. The bible says: "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."

For we who believe the bible, the fact that God has spoken to humankind is not disputed. From Genesis to Revelation, we read some form of the phrase "And God said" or "Thus saith the Lord" or "God spoke" hundreds of times. Since man was not only created by God and created for a specific purpose, which includes fellowship with Him, it is obvious that God would in some way communicate with man. Man is made in the image of God which includes the fact that man is an intelligent and moral being created with the power to reason and make moral choices. Man was also made to rule over the rest of God's creation. And he was created to worship and serve God, bringing glory to Him. Well, if we are created by God to be like Him, to know Him, and to serve and please Him, then that necessitates God communicating in some way with us. Here is the question though: HOW does God do so? Has God spoken to humans in an intelligent, organized, established way or does He simply to the individual in some perhaps vague and abstract way and mysteriously communicate with man through inner voices, visions, feelings, hunches and so forth? Are we to believe all the MANY claims made today that God is speaking to individuals and that He is individually communicating with people His will for them?

In Hebrews 1, the writer summarizes God's communication with mankind from the beginning of time until now and we want to take a closer look at what this passage says and learn HOW God has spoken to us. Let's read the passage again. Hebrews 1:1-2 says "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."

First, this passage divides history into two eras of time. He says that God first spoke to the fathers (referring to all of those from Moses until the time Christ came) and then he says God has spoken to US in these last days (meaning the last dispensation from the time of Christ until the end of time). And he shows us that God distinctly spoke in these two divisions of time through different representatives or through different channels. So, let's begin our study with the first era – from the creation until Christ. The apostle says that in that long period of time God spoke to the fathers (that is, those who lived in that era) in different ways and at different times THROUGH the prophets. Well, that alone tells us that God did not directly speak to the individual. God spoke to His people, as a whole, THROUGH certain individuals he calls prophets. These prophets (selected by God) were God's spokespersons. God delivered messages to a larger audience THROUGH them.

Now, during that era, there were two distinct dispensations. We usually refer to them as the Patriarchal dispensation and the Mosaic era. The Patriarchal dispensation was the time from Adam until the nation of Israel was formed. At the time God began to form Israel as a people, he raised up prophets, first and foremost Moses to speak to them. Now, from Adam to Moses (the Patriarchal age), God dealt with mankind on the family level. The father or patriarch was the primary means of God working through the family to carry out His purposes. We find in Genesis 1 thru 3. God directly spoke to Adam. Adam was responsible to pass God's word on to his family beginning with Eve. When Adam's sons became men, God spoke directly to Cain in Genesis 4:9-11. He spoke directly to Noah warning him of the flood and giving him directions to build the ark. Noah, consequently, because a preacher of righteousness. Noah became the channel through which God, in effect, spoke to the world, beginning with His own family. He later spoke to Abraham, and so forth.

But with the formation of the nation of Israel, God's economy shifted to a national model. God dealt with Israel as a nation and spoke to the people through prophets beginning with Moses. Moses was the great lawgiver and God made His law known to the people through Moses. Moses died and Joshua took his place and as the nation's history unfolded, God sent a series of prophets onto the stage to deliver the word of God to them. Through the entire Old Covenant or Old Testament system, God made Himself known to His people through the work of these divinely called and inspired prophets. He revealed Himself to the people through the laws, ceremonies, sacrifices, types or symbols, and the prophecies that the prophets beginning with Moses were given. Thus, the writer of Hebrews says that God spoke in TIMES PAST unto their fathers BY THE PROPHETS. So, please notice that God did not regularly and randomly speak to the people of either the families of the Patriarchal age or the nation of Israel during the Mosaic age. He spoke through a few individuals He selected to bear His message to others.

And then we should note, that God did not speak with great frequency. When God gave a revelation, it was not a common, everyday occurrence. It was a rather momentous event. In fact, if you look at the thousands of years of human history, God has spoken very little – but what He has said has been profoundly important to the human race. He was not speaking to individuals telling them what to eat for breakfast or reminding them to put their seat belt on -- but His speaking involved messages of great importance to His people delivered through certain appointed prophets and with His larger plan and purpose always in view. Not only that, but beginning with Moses, the prophets were endued with the

ability to perform miracles to validate that God was speaking through them. We read of divinely inspired prophets such as Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Elisha, and so forth having the power to perform wonders meant to convince the people to whom they spoke that their message was from God and thus to be received as truth. In fact, throughout the scripture from the time of Moses to the time of Christ's apostles, miraculous power was used by God as a means of validating the message he spoke through them. Hebrews 2 verses 3 and 4, for example, says: "how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?" The miracles the prophets performed served as divine credentials that God had spoken through them and we need to remember that. I contend today that if a person claims to be a prophet of God or that God has spoken to them, they should be able to prove such a claim like the prophets of old could and did.

So, God spoke in the era from creation until Christ directly to the prophets (a spokesperson) and thus indirectly to the people. But what about the present era of time? What about from the time of Christ in the first century until now? Well, let's read again. "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has IN THESE LAST DAYS" (that's the Christian dispensation beginning in the first century) God has "spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;" Do you notice the larger picture here? In the first era of time, it was a period of preparation. God was preparing the world for the unfurling of His eternal plan to save the world through His Son Jesus Christ.

So, through the prophets, He delivered messages that were intended to do several things. First, they were intended to show man that he was a sinner in need of redemption. Moses gave the Old Testament law "because of sin" according to Paul in Galatians 3:19. In other words, the Law God revealed through Moses showed that man is unable to keep the law so perfectly that he can stand on his own two feet justified and righteous before God. The law of Moses condemned man as a sinner because no man ever kept it except for Jesus Christ. Second, His messages revealed His own holiness and thus His righteous indignation toward sin and sinners. Third, His messages pointed forward to His ultimate answer to these problems in the sending and the sacrifice of His own Son, Christ Jesus. And fourth, His messages at that time all facilitated in one way or another the events that had to come to pass for His eternal plan to be fulfilled. So, God always spoke with the greater plan and purpose in view and did so during this preparatory time leading up to the coming of the Savior. But notice, He says NOW IN THESE LAST DAYS, He has spoken to us BY HIS SON. Now he's talking about this dispensation of time. God HAS spoken to us BY or THROUGH His Son, Christ Jesus. We pointed out in a recent broadcast that John 1 calls Jesus "the word". He is the expression of God and – God's will. All revelation before Christ was pointing forward to Christ, but now, Christ has come as the ultimate revelation of God and His plan for mankind. Christ is, therefore, the great Prophet of the ages through Whom God has spoken and Whom we are all to heed. Now, I want us to notice HOW God has spoken to us through His Son.

Notice that in the first era of time, God spoke directly to a few and those few spoke to the rest. God, in other words, INDIRECTLY spoke to His people through the prophets He gave those messages to. Peter tells us in 2 Peter 1:21 that those prophets spoke "as they were moved (or borne along) by the Holy Spirit." So, God spoke to the prophets through the Holy Spirit and the prophets spoke to the people. God did not speak directly to the people through a literal voice. And neither did he speak to the people directly through the Holy Spirit. Rather, He, through the Holy Spirit, spoke to the prophets who, in turn delivered those messages to the people and those prophets performed miracles as a sign that God had spoken through them. Well, friend, God's message in these last days has come down to us in a similar

way. The writer of Hebrews says that, number one, God has spoken and second, that He has done that speaking THROUGH His Son. Jesus came speaking the will of God and performed miracles that people might know that He was who He said He was, according to John 20:30-31. God has spoken through Him, and we are to recognize this and heed what He has said and will answer to God for whether we obey His word, according to John 12:48. When we listen to Christ, we're listening to God the Father. When we obey Christ, we're obeying God the Father.

But then, if God is speaking to us THROUGH Christ, the next question is how does Christ speak to US? Well, go back to Hebrews 2. Verses 1-4: "Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward (that's talking about when God spoke in the Old Testament), how shall WE escape if WE neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?" So, notice, God has spoken, first by His Son and what Christ has spoken was confirmed to us by those who heard Him. Who is that talking about? Friend, it's talking about His chosen apostles. Christ came as the image and expression of God to mankind and Christ, in turn, selected a group of men to be divinely appointed spokesmen for Him. Those men were His apostles and those prophets whom he sent forth after His return to heaven to speak the word of God to US. God endowed them power from the Holy Spirit to work miracles to attest to the fact that their message was true and from Christ.

Now, these apostles were promised the Holy Spirit to guide them and empower them to speak and to write. Before His death, resurrection, and return to glory, Jesus told His apostles (and only His apostles, I might add) in John 14 and John 16 that when He went back to heaven, He would send the Holy Spirit to them in a special sense. The Holy Spirit would be their paraclete Who would "teach them all things" and give them a perfect remembrance of the things Christ had said to them (John 14:26) and He would "guide them into ALL truth" (John 16:13) and underscore that word ALL – ALL truth. And through Christ's word which the Holy Spirit would inspire them to speak, the world would be convicted of its sin, taught of righteousness, and warned of judgment (John 16:8). You see, Jesus was saying that He would speak to US through THEM, the apostles.

So, God has revealed Himself to US in the person of Christ who gave His chosen apostles the Holy Spirit, by whose power, they made known the mind, will, and plan of God in this final dispensation of time. The apostles are called "ambassadors for Christ" in 2 Corinthians 5:20 and that means more than just representing the gospel or reflecting the character of Christ to the world – it is referring to an official office that carried authority from the King to speak on the King's behalf. That's what the apostles were sent forth to do. They along with the inspired prophets of the first century church were the mouthpieces through which God spoke to the world for the final time – making known His wonderful plan of the ages to reconcile the world to Himself. God does not speak to the individual and deal with the individual on an independent basis. God has spoken to all through His Son who delegated His authority and assigned the task of making God's plan known. So, you see, according to the writer of Hebrews, God's revelation occurred slowly over time until it was fully unfolded and completed in Christ Jesus. We today, have the full and final revelation of God. The scriptures are sufficient to furnish us unto EVERY good work, according to Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Jude in verse 3 says that the faith was once for all delivered to the saints. It is not an ongoing revelation. God HAS spoken through His Son and the word of His Son has been given to us through those who heard Him – His apostles. Those apostles wrote those things down in scripture which has been providentially preserved for us even today. When you listen to the bible – you're listening to the apostles and prophets – when you listen to them -- you're listening to Christ.

When you're listening to Christ – you're listening to God. God has spoken to us through His word, the bible.

Now, the question is what is our duty to that word? Hebrews 2:1 says, "Therefore we must give the more EARNEST HEED to the things we have heard, lest we drift away." 1 Thessalonians 2:13 says, "For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe." Friend, if we are to know God; if we are to serve God; if we are to PLEASE God, we must listen to God and God has spoken to every one of US not directly but through His word – the bible. May we receive it and obey it and be saved.

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