



IS GOD STILL SPEAKING?

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Good morning. It's good to start the day with you and the week with you, and I'm glad you've taken a few moments to open the word of God and study the scriptures with me. A lot of people say that God speaks to them. You certainly don't have to look far to find a preacher who will claim that the Lord gave him a unique message. And it's very common to hear people say that they are led of the Lord to say this or to think that or to do the other. But does God speak to men today; is he still speaking? For that matter, has God spoken to any of us at all at any time?

I invite your attention to the book of Hebrews, and I want to read to you, beginning in chapter one, and verse one. Where the record says "God, who at sundry times, "and in diverse or various manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, "hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, "whom He has appointed heir of all things, "by whom also he made the worlds. "Who being the brightness of his glory "and the express image of his person, "and upholding all things by the word of his power, "when he had by himself purged our sins, "sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. Now that was Hebrews chapter one verses one through three, now look at the first four verses of chapter two. There the writer continues, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed "to the things which we have heard, "lest at any time we should let them slip, for if the word spoken by angels was steadfast and every transgression and disobedience "received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken to the Lord "and was

confirmed unto us by them that heard Him, God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with diverse miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will."

These verses clearly establish at least two very important facts, first, that God has spoken. He has spoken to man. And second, that God spoke using human messengers to relay what he had to say. That's what we want to learn about today. How has God spoken and is God continuing to speak in this modern time? What kind of message does God have for mankind, how is that message sent to earth? And is that message incomplete, and therefore God needs to continue speaking to us in this present day? Well, those are all questions we'll take up in our study today, but first, a song from the congregation.

The English preacher and author Arthur Pink many years ago suggested the following scenario in one of his books. He asked, what if an angel from Heaven was dispatched to earth to appear to mankind, and it was announced through some credible source that he was bringing a very important message from God Himself? Suppose it were announced that this angel was going to deliver this message in a large venue, an auditorium somewhere, and that it was going to be broadcast on live television or transcribed in the next morning's newspaper. Today, we might say livestreamed over YouTube or through the internet. If nothing else, at least out of curiosity, you would have to admit most people would want to know what he had to say. I'm sure television ratings would shatter any standing records. The newspapers would fly off the rack wherever newspapers are still printed. It would go viral on social media. People would certainly throng to see such a sight and hear this angel speak in person if possible. And not only that, but I'm also quite sure people would hang on every word and the speech would be recorded and replayed over and over again for days and months and years, for generations to come. It would be the talk of the country, the talk of the world. And yet God has spoken to man and the message He sent barely receives a passing shrug from many today and all throughout time, for that matter.

Paul declares in Hebrews chapter one that God has spoken. And you would expect that he would. The deist has said that God just wound the world up like a clock and is letting it run down; that He created and then essentially walked away and has no concern or involvement in human affairs. But we don't believe that. If God made man in His own image, (and He did) if he has concern for him and any involvement in his life (and he does), that would necessitate a revelation of God to man. After all, how would we know anything about such a God, much less have any kind of relationship to him if God never spoke to man but instead, through the ages, He remained enshrouded in eternal mystery and sat silently through the ages? One problem with that is, people would make God be whatever they wanted him to be, which is what essentially idolatry is.

Some say that they know God and they know the mind of God because they communicate with God through means such as nature. They somehow sense God's mind and God's character and God's will. It is true that God communicates His presence, His power, His existence, through nature, but that is not how he communicates His will for man. It's not enough to know that God

exists. It's not even enough to appreciate the awesomeness of God, the power of God, and the immense wisdom of God. God wants us to know Him. God wants us to serve Him.

Now, the book of nature is what we call God's natural revelation. The Psalmist David spoke of it this way in the 19th Psalm. He said, "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork, day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." Those wonderful and poetic words are David's way of saying that the sun and moon and stars are all celestial evangelists that travel around the earth every 24 hours, shouting in every language known to man, "God is there; there is a God." I never cease to be amazed at how intelligent men and women, how educated men and women can behold the beauty and glory, power, precision, order of the world and the universe beyond, and say that there is no intelligent designer, there is no God, but of course such people say that every day. The Bible says in Psalm 14 verse one, "The fool has said in his heart that there is no God." And being a fool, according to the Bible, is not a head problem, it's a heart problem.

The fact is, there's evidence that God exists. Just look around. Look at the universe, and how could it have come from random chaos? You might say, "the universe is governed "by natural or physical laws,". Well, yes, but those laws had to be framed. How did those laws come to be? How did something come out of nothing? Those are questions, of course, that must be answered. Well, the fact of the matter is, there is an eternal and transcendent and powerful and intelligent being, that brought all these things to pass. And every time we take the time to marvel at the beauty of the earth, we see the fingerprints of an omniscient and omnipotent God. And so, we come to the obvious conclusion that there is a God, and that's very important, that's critical. But we can't stop there. If we stop there, where does that leave us? What do we know about that God? How could we ever serve such a God? The fact is, we don't know his will by looking into the starry sky or listening to a babbling brook or looking at the beautiful mountains. In Romans chapter one, Paul said the Gentiles of old were without excuse for their unbelief, because the evidence of his existence and power are clearly seen in the things that he made. And those same people lived in spiritual darkness because they did not have the mind of God revealed unto them. Now, why would God reveal His mind to them if they rejected the light of the evidence that He already gave them in creation? So, since they rejected God from the very beginning because they wanted to follow their own willful way, God worked through the Jewish people, the children of Abraham, through which to work out his plan and purpose, until, in the fullness of time, Jesus Christ came. But during that interim time, the Jews had a revelation of God's mind. God spoke through Moses, and he spoke through the succeeding prophets. Before that, God spoke to the families through the patriarchs, but then he spoke to his people, the nation, through Moses, and through the prophets of that dispensation.

Well, the Hebrew writer tells us in Hebrews chapter one, that now, that same God who spoke to them in those ways and through various people in that time, has in these last days spoken to us by his Son. So, no man can know the mind of God until God reveals his mind to him. We not only need the natural revelation of creation, but we also need the supernatural revelation of the creator's mind and will. How do we receive that? Has God spoken to us? Yes, He has spoken

to us. God has a message for you, and for me. Where does that message come from? Well, to explain, let's spend a few moments in the second chapter of first Corinthians. If you have a Bible, read with me beginning in verse seven. There Paul says, "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."

Now, I want to start in verse 14, and work our way back. Notice that Paul said, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." Who is this natural man that Paul is talking about? Well, to sum it up, the natural man is a man who acquires his knowledge by natural means. He's a man who leans upon the wisdom of this world. That's the context of Paul's writing here in these opening chapters of First Corinthians. The Corinthians were part of the Greek culture, the Greek world, which placed a high premium upon the philosophy of man. They leaned upon human understanding and human philosophy. Paul reminds them that he didn't come espousing some human philosophy, but he came preaching Christ and him crucified. He came preaching a message from Heaven. But now Paul says, "The natural man cannot know and understand the mind of God. Why? Because God hasn't made his mind known through those means. You can't divine the will of God through human philosophy. You cannot divine the will of God through science, for example, as a scientist functioning only as a scientist. He would fit the definition of a natural man. He may be very intelligent and educated. He draws conclusions based upon what he observes in the natural world. A geologist studies the rocks. A chemist studies the chemical composition of things. The astronomer studies the things that lie out there in space, peering into his telescope. He observes the planets and the stars, and he may acquire a great deal of knowledge through his studies, and perhaps reach the same conclusion, rightly, that David did 3000 years ago: that there must be a God or a higher power for something so wonderful to come to be. But none of these men or women can know the mind of God through such channels of knowledge. Human wisdom and human philosophy cannot give that kind of knowledge. These things are not naturally received, but rather spiritually discerned.

Now, what Paul's talking about is that God made his mind known through a supernatural process called revelation and inspiration. God has spoken unto man. Now back up to verse 11

where he says: "For what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him. Even so, the things of God knoweth no man but the spirit of God." Now here Paul is simply saying that one cannot know the mind of another until the other person articulates his thoughts in word or in deed. In the same way, God's thoughts had to be articulated unto man. So, the natural man can't know the mind of God. The spiritual man must discern those things. Well, who's the spiritual man? The spiritual man, according to the context of Paul's writing, is the man who was inspired by the Holy Spirit, the man to whom the Holy Spirit revealed the mind of God. That's not as Calvinist theology suggests (and a very wide swath of denominational theology): that a person must have the Holy Spirit in some abstract and miraculous way to understand the word of God. What it means is, man had to have the Holy Spirit to get the word of God to begin with. Man could not divine the word of God through natural means, it had to be spiritually given. The mind of God must be spiritually discerned, and that necessitated the Holy Spirit coming and inspiring Christ's apostles. God revealed His will through the apostles -- his revelation.

That helps us to understand what Paul was saying back in verses 9 and 10. He said, "But as it is written, eye has not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love him but God hath revealed them unto us, by his Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things yea, the deep things of God." Now, some people think verse nine is talking about Heaven. You hear that verse quoted at funerals or in sermons about Heaven saying no man has ever seen Heaven to be able to know or talk about what it will be like, and so forth. That's not what Paul is talking about at all. He's talking about the things of God's mind, the mystery of redemption, the mystery of Christ. He says that God's plan for man had not been revealed to man before the coming of Jesus, and before Christ commissioned his apostles and filled them with the Holy Spirit and used them as vessels through which to make known the mind of God to the rest of us. The Holy Spirit brought that message to earth when Christ clothed the apostles with inspiration and confirming power. In contrast to back there where eye had never seen and ear had never heard and never entered the heart of man, now, Paul says, those things are known. Well, how are they known? They're no longer a mystery. How are they now made known?

You see, if God is not finished speaking, there would still be things that would be a mystery so far as God's plan, but God HAS revealed his plan. Now, we're not talking about the secret things that God is never going to reveal to man in this life. But we're talking about the things that pertain to our relationship to him, our duty to God, and so forth. Our salvation, Christian living; God has made all those things known. How? Paul says that God revealed them to us through his Spirit. Well then, who's us? Well, the spiritual man -- the man who was inspired of the Holy Spirit; the Apostles and prophets of the first century, you see. And thus, Paul says in verse 13, "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." You see, it's not a feeling; it's not an impulse; it's not an instinct. God has made his mind known in the form of WORDS. What words? The words that were given to his inspired apostles; the words that the Holy Spirit furnished them which they have since written down and communicated to us today, yesterday, and the days to come, all throughout this dispensation.

Now, because God has spoken to them, and they have made that knowledge known to us, as Paul one time said, "So that when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ," he told the Ephesians. We can understand the mind of God by reading what Christ's apostles wrote. So, Paul then says, in verses 15 and 16, "He that is spiritual," (now that is the Apostles) "he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man." Why, because they were superhuman? No. But because they had the Holy Spirit leading and guiding them. He says, "For who hath known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him, but we have the mind of Christ." So, the spiritual man Paul refers to is not you or me, but rather the Apostles inspired by the Holy Spirit. Their teachings were not subject to the approval or disapproval of anyone else, judged by anybody else, rightly, because they were the words of God himself. And Paul affirms that he and the other apostles possessed the mind of Christ. In other words, God spoke to the rest of us through them; the things God inspired them to write were collected into what we now know as the New Testament scriptures.

Now then, go back to Hebrews chapter one, verses one and two. There he says, "God, who at sundry times, and in diverse or various manners or ways spake in time past unto the fathers." (that's talking about the people back under that old dispensation) "hath in these last days..." Last days doesn't mean the modern days that some people speculate, or nearing the end of time, that's not how the Bible uses the term last days. The term last days refers to the whole Christian age. "...He has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." This refers to the gradual process that God used, beginning at the creation, to reveal himself to man, God used different men and different methods to make himself known. And one thing we can conclude from that is that God does not individually speak to all people; He never has! God has always used certain designated ones through whom to make his will known. He spoke to the families through the patriarchs. He spoke to the nation of Israel through Moses and the prophets. And he has spoken to US through Christ and his apostles. Paul says God spoke in diverse manners or different ways, he manifested Himself and His plan in a multitude of ways throughout the developmental age of mankind. Then what happened? "In these last days, He has spoken unto us, by His Son." And then he says, in chapter two, that that great salvation was first spoken by the Lord, and then was confirmed unto us by them that heard him. Well, who heard him? The apostles! They were the witnesses of Jesus Christ's resurrection. They were with Him throughout the three and a half years of His ministry. They learned His teachings while He walked upon earth. And then when Jesus returned to the glory, He dispatched His Holy Spirit to these men. The Holy Spirit was the 'Paraclete,' as the Greek word in John chapter 16 suggests, who came alongside them, and empowered them, and inspired them, and led them, to remember what Jesus had said upon earth, and to reveal the things that Jesus was yet to reveal after He went back to Heaven.

So it was through the Apostles that the final revelation of God, in His Son Jesus Christ, was given. That revelation, the Hebrew writer said, was confirmed by those men. God bore those men witness with signs, miracles, and wonders. That's why the Apostles possessed the power that they did. That's why we read about those miracles being performed in the New Testament. That's why the Holy Spirit was operative miraculously in the first century church; because this

was the age in which God was speaking through Christ who was represented by His apostles and prophets. That revelation was being confirmed by miraculous signs and wonders. If God was still speaking to men like He spoke to the people in the first century, He would still be allowing and empowering men to work the same kind of miracles that the apostles could work in the first century. They would raise the dead, heal the sick, and all of that. But you see, Paul taught in first Corinthians chapter 13, that those supernatural gifts passed away with the coming of the perfect revelation of Jesus Christ, when the New Testament scriptures were complete. And thus, Jude could tell us, in Jude 1:3, that we are to “earnestly contend for the faith that was once delivered unto the saints”. That’s better translated ‘once for all’, or ‘once for all time’ delivered unto the saints. God has spoken. Don't wait for some new revelation from God. He has spoken, and this Word is alive; it is living; it is powerful! It can shape and mold our lives into the image of the Master, Jesus Christ, if we will just open our hearts to receive it by faith and obey it.

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