

LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

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GOD HAS SPOKEN

"God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His son..." (Heb. 1:1). The most important thing the Hebrew writer can say about God is that God has spoken. He begins the letter with the word "God." He doesn't give any introduction. He doesn't tell us anything about God, except the fact that God has spoken. He was very abrupt. He wants us to know that God has spoken. There are many things he could have said about God, but the important thing he wants us to see is God has spoken and continues to speak through His son. For that reason, we must be sure that whatever we believe, whatever we preach or teach, whatever we practice must be what God said. The most important thing in our life is what God has said in His Word. Anything not found in the Word of God, regardless of what we think, believe or practice, if God has said it we had better believe and practice it: and if He has not said it in His word, we had better not believe or practice it.

God has spoken in the Scriptures and the voice of God is an awesome thing. It's a horrendous thing to hear the voice of God in the Scriptures. Christians take this for granted many times and we think the Old Testament saints just went around talking to God all the time, with God coming down and conversing with them just like anyone would converse with them. In Genesis 3:8, after man sinned, it is said: "And they heard the sound of the Lord God (actually the word "sound" is the word "voice"), walking in the garden in the cool of the day. We usually take "the cool of the day" to be in the late evening. That phrase cool of the day is translated that God was walking in the garden as "the spirit of the day." Verse 8 states: "and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to man, and said to him, 'Where are you?' and he said, 'I heard the voice of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.'" God came thundering as the spirit of the day into the presence of Adam and Adam was afraid of the voice of God and hid himself.

In the book of Hebrews, the 12th chapter, he summarizes for us the voice of God as it came to Israel when God was giving them the Law. In Exodus 19 before Moses went upon the mount to receive the ten commandments, God had already spoken them audibly to the people. His voice had thundered from Sinai, described as being "the blast of a trumpet, and the sound of words which was such that those who heard begged that no further word should be spoken, for they could not bear the command, 'even if a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned.' And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, 'I am full of fear and trembling.'" So the voice of God is an awesome thing. Verse 26 states: "And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying 'Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven.'" In Scripture it was an awesome thing when God spoke to man. There are many today who claim to have received messages from God in tongues and prophesies and visions and revelations. They tell us that "God told me so and so" or "God said this to me."

Deuteronomy 18:18-20 warns: "I will raise up a prophet from among them like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. It shall come about that whoever shall not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself shall require it of him. But the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, that prophet shall die." James 3:1 points out that it is an awesome responsibility to teach or preach the word of God because we will be judged by a stricter judgment: "Let not many of you become teachers, knowing that as such, we shall incur a stricter judgment." Therefore, we must be sure that what we believe, and what we teach, and stand for, and what we base our lives upon is exactly what God is saying in His Word, and not something somebody has presumed He said, or what our tradition has said.

So God spoke through the prophets long ago (in other words, in ages past) and God has always been speaking...He spoke to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us through His son. "These last days"...there are many passages in both Testaments that refer to "the last days." Many people are saying we are living in the last days. We wonder who told them? How does anyone know we are living in the last days? They say, "Look at everything happening in the world, it is so wicked, there is so much sin in the world, the events of the last days and final things are lining up, so we have got to be living in the last days." Look at the wickedness that has always been in the world. It has always been that way. There is no indication we are living "in the last days." In fact the last days in the New Testament usually, not always, but usually refer to the time in which they were writing to the early Christians. It was the last days of the Old Covenant. The whole Jewish system, the temple, the city of Jerusalem, the priesthood, and the sacrifices were all ending.

In Acts 2:17 Peter quotes from Joel 2:28-32, from which he states: "It shall be *in the last days*, God says that 'I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all flesh of mankind'..." He says this was being fulfilled now. Peter was speaking in the last days. Hebrews 9:26 identifies the last days: "...Otherwise, he would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation (or in completion) of the ages he has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." It was in the consummation, in the end of the Jewish age, in which Christ was manifested to put away sin. And so, in end of "that age (KJV world) Christ was manifested to put away sin." This is "the last days" the writer is specifying. In the last days of the Old Covenant age God spoke His final message through Christ.

Christ made purification for sin; the problem man has faced from the beginning when Adam sinned and continues until Christ comes back. But Christ settled the problem for those who believe. He made purification for sin, which means God has forgiven and taken away our sin. Christ opened the way to the Father, and we have free access to His throne. Something Israel never had.

The way has been open, and we can come into the very presence of God, and the only ones that can do this are those who are free from sin. Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice and made purification for sin in order that we might be accepted before the Throne. He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high in order that he may continually intercede for us making his sacrifice applicable to our lives on a daily basis; he didn't just make the sacrifice for sins and forget about us, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high in order to see that his sacrificial death and offering were appropriated to our lives. So the same thing that saves us is the same thing that keeps us walking in forgiveness before Him. This is the message of redemption God has spoken to His people.

Now let's go back to the beginning when God first spoke. In the first three chapters of Genesis there is revealed to us the way the word of God relates to all of life. Anytime we want a pattern for anything God has ever done in the world, we can go to Genesis and see there the pattern God has laid out for us. In Genesis 1:1,2, in the very beginning, it says, "God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters." It was in this context that God spoke. It was then that God said let something began to happen...God said, "Let there be light" and He begins to create out of this chaos, the universe, as we know it. And every time His creative word said "let it be" it came into being. So the Hebrew writer says in Hebrews 11:3, "By faith we understand that the worlds were created by the word of God..." God's word, then, determines the environment in which we live, and addresses all the circumstances in our life. There is nothing in our life that is by chance. Even the time in which we are living, the place in which we are living, the environment around us that so many are concerned about is determined by the word of God.

In Genesis 1:28 after God created man and woman, He speaks to them. God addresses man directly. Note the categories in which His Word falls. The first word is a command. His command summons them to fulfill mankind's vocation by ruling over creation. The basis for our fulfilling the word of God is to obey His word. The first thing God demands of us when He speaks to us through Christ is to believe Him and obey Him...it is a command...Don't underestimate what God is commanding us to do.

His second word is an explanation of what He is doing in the world, and what he is doing in the life of man and for man (ver. 29, 30). Then after He had commanded them, He said, "Behold (look around you), I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you, and to every beast of the earth and to every bird in the sky and to everything that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food, and it was so." This is a word of testimony. God is saying to man "look at what I have done for you." He explains to man what He has made for him and how he is supposed to use it. This tells us there is no explanation for life outside the Word of God. The Word of God explains to us what God is doing in our lives ...and we had better listen.

God wants us to know what His plan and purpose is for the church. He wants us to know what He expects of the church, and what He expects of us as individuals. He wants us to know where we came from, and who we are, and where we are going and what kind of plans He has for us. Sometimes when we begin to talk of these things we are viewed as being a little radical because our tradition

tells us all God is interested in is trying to save us and get us away from Satan and carry us off to heaven. If that's all God wants of us, why did He go to the trouble to do all the things He has said in the Word of God? He has a plan and purpose for every life. He brought His church into existence and put it in the world from which He expects a response. He explained it to Adam and Eve, and He explains it to us.

We aren't just struggling through, trying to make heaven our home. We aren't just getting through trials and tribulations. We aren't waiting for the day when Christ comes and takes us out of it all. He has placed us here and He said I want you to be "children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life" (Phil. 2:15, 16). God wants the church to bring the message of redemption and power into the world and learn how to rule because some day the church is going to rule the world. And if that doesn't blow you away, He said we are going to judge angels (1 Cor. 6:1-3).

Men are trying to find out where we came from, who we are, and why we are here. In the 1960s, that was a big thing. Our young people went off to find themselves. Eastern religions invaded us. The gurus over ran us. People pay thousands of dollars to psychiatrists and psychologists to tell them who they are, and to tell them the meaning of life. It is all right here in the Word of God—who we are, what God expects of us, and what life is all about. We are the only ones that have the answers, and sometimes we don't know it, and most of the time, we don't act like we have any answers.

In Genesis 2:16, 17 God spoke another word: "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree in the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat from it you shall surely die." A word of prohibition and sanction...He puts limits on what man can do. His word sets the limits of our life. There are absolutes in life. There is right and there is wrong, and God's Word is the only criteria, the only standard of right and wrong, and God sets limits on what we are to do and are not to do. It is only in God's Word that we find these limits. Our society today has rejected God's Word, so we have no limits, no standard of right and wrong, and everyone is like the people in the book of Judges...they do what is right in their own eyes. Modern society says anything you want to do if it feels right do it. But God speaks in His word and sets limits and parameters.

Finally, after man sinned, God speaks again...He speaks the word of promise. His promises are both favorable and unfavorable. The favorable promise is in Genesis 3:15: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel." This is the first promise of Christ. When God speaks the word of promise, He says He is going to remedy the problem of sin. He is going to punish Satan and bring a redeemer into the world and undo what Adam had done. God, being true to His promise did that.

There were also some unfavorable promises. To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth. In pain you shall bring forth children; yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you. And He said to Adam, "Because you listened to the voice of your wife. Cursed is the ground because of you. In toil you shall eat of it all the days of our life."