

# 524 How Does God Speak to Us Today

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## God's Answers to Life's Questions

If you've listened to the radio or TV, you've probably heard someone say, "The Lord spoke to me and said..." or "let God speak to your heart..." suggesting that God speaks directly to people today. Other people feel that the feelings they possess are evidence of God's will for their lives.

We are asking, how does God speak to us today? Is it through voices, through feelings, or through councils and creeds? Or could it be that there is a richer, truer source than any of these? Could it be that God today speaks to us through the Word, the Bible?

The Hebrew writer said at the beginning of Hebrews, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world" (Heb. 1:1-2). It is a wonderful thing that God has spoken. Some people think of God as hiding or disinterested in us, His creatures; but God has spoken to us in the most wonderful, glorious way: "in His Son." We know God, because of Jesus Christ, and it is the most wonderful blessing we have that God has spoken to us in His Son Jesus Christ!

Because God speaks through His Son, we need to know that Jesus is the authority. He has more authority than anyone, any group, or any church. He is the Son of God. Paul said that God "raised Him [Jesus] from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Eph. 1:20-23). The church is subject to Jesus, not to any man or any council.

Jesus said before He ascended into heaven, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). Jesus does not need a representative on earth, because He himself is the head of His church on earth. John the Baptist said of Jesus in John 3:35-36, "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." There is no person in all the earth that is not subject to Jesus Christ. God has given all things into His hand. Jesus is Lord of all, and we need to listen to Him very closely.

We shall be judged one day by the words of Jesus. Jesus said in John 12:48-49, "He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment *as to* what to say and what to speak."

We will not be judged by what people think, by opinion polls, by the creeds of men, or by some denomination's beliefs. We will be judged by the words of Jesus found in the New Testament. We need to know what the Bible says, don't we?

Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, gave the Word His Father had given Him to His apostles. In John 14:25-26, Jesus told the apostles, "These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." God determined that the words He had given Jesus would be taught by the Spirit to the apostles for their time and for all time. The words of Jesus were not merely for the first century but for every century as long as this world stands. God "in these last days has spoken to us in His Son." God is speaking to us in the Bible!

Jesus promised His apostles in John 16:12-15, "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose *it* to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose *it* to you." The apostles knew the truth of God—the whole truth of God. They were the spokesman for God in their own day and for all time.

In his brief epistle, Jude wrote in verse 3, "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints." Jude who wrote sometime between 65 and 80 AD was already speaking of "the faith," that body of doctrine, which was "once for all time" handed down to the saints. What the word said in the first century, it also says and means today for us. Jude wanted Christians not only to believe that faith but also to "contend" for it, to uphold it and to keep handing it down.

Paul told Timothy, his true son in the faith, "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). The faith was not just for the apostles; it was for all people of all time in all places. This is why Paul could say to the church at Ephesus in Ephesians 4:4-6, "*There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." There is indeed just one faith, and we are to contend for it. When people get away from it, they move away from the revealed will of God.

The writers of the New Testament said that they were speaking with the authority of God. In 1 Corinthians 2:12-13, Paul said, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*." Paul said that what he taught did not come from men but from the Holy Spirit. God was behind his teachings and his writings. That is why we can say Paul said or say God said it, because both statements are true.

Later in this same epistle, Paul deals with the problem of women speaking out in church. Paul said, "The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says...it is improper for a woman to speak in church. Was it from you that the word of God *first* went forth? Or has it come to you only? If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. But if anyone does not recognize *this*, he is not recognized" (1 Cor. 14:34-38). Paul would not be ignored.

On another occasion Paul defends himself against some of his enemies by explaining where he got his gospel. Paul said, "For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but *I received it* through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:11-12). It was because of this that he could be so sure about his gospel—that his gospel was true and right! In fact, the apostle Paul warns everyone to stay with his gospel and not change it. Anyone who changes his gospel risks losing his soul and the souls of those he teaches.

Paul said in Galatians 1:6-10, "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ."

No one can play fast and loose with God's written Word. When you get away from the Bible, you get away from God! In 1 Thessalonians 2:13, Paul spoke well of the Thessalonians because of their faith and obedience. He said, "For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted *it* not *as* the word of men, but *for* what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe." God's Word can work in our lives, when we are willing to listen to it and apply it in our lives. Unless we are willing to humble ourselves to its message, however, we cannot receive its blessings.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:15, Paul said, "So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us." God has always wanted his people to stay with what they have learned from Jesus and his apostles, not moving from those things or getting involved with human traditions or human ideas. There truly is but one gospel, so hold to it.

With so many ideas, so many denominations and so many non-denominational churches saying so many things, do they really all speak for God? When they contradict themselves and argue with each other, are they really from God?

Jesus Himself distinguishes people by how they listen and deal with His Word. He said to the Jews in John 8:31-32, "If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." To continue in Jesus' words is to remain, abide, or stay there. Jesus said "true" disciples do that. Some people say they are disciples, but they go outside to other sources of information. Some believe they hear from God directly, some trust in their feelings, some merely look to whatever is popular and "happening." The unfortunate thing is that when they get away from the Word, they lose God too.

Jesus said in Matthew 7:21-23, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'" It is not talking religious

or doing religious things that make us right with God. A true Christian is one that hears and does the will of the Father who is in heaven.

These were religious people who talked and acted like good, religious people; but Jesus rejected them because they did not follow what God wanted. They did what they wanted, what they liked, or what they thought was popular. They did not do the will of God, however.

Does your church believe and practice things you can read about in your Bible? If the "true" disciples remain in the Word, how do you rate the church you attend? Now, we will all be judged by the words of Jesus, not by how we feel about things. Wouldn't you hate to hear the Lord reject you at the end, because you believed and practiced a "man-made" religion?

The only standard we have is the Word of God, found in the Bible. Let's stay with what we know to be true and right. We have no promise, no blessing, when we substitute our own ways for the Word of God. We truly become "lawless," because we aren't listening to God but to our own desires.

The best thing we can do is read God's Word everyday and see whether or not the things we are hearing are so. Don't be fooled by religious people who are not giving you God's word but their own opinions. Stay with the Bible, and stay with God!

The Hebrew writer told Christians in the first century some things we too need to hear. He said in Hebrews 2:1-3, "For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away *from it*. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" It is very easy for us to become neglectful and drift away from the things we have heard from the Scriptures. That's where the truth is! Not in our feelings, some council, some creed, or some tradition. Go to the Word for the Truth!

When you get away from the Scriptures, you get away from what you know is from God. Feelings can deceive, men can be wrong, but God's Word has stood true for centuries and says the same things today it said from the beginning. You can trust it. Why not trust it and become a Christian. You do that by trusting and loving the Lord, turning away from sin in repentance, by confessing the name of Jesus before all, and by being baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. When you do that, God will wash away your sins and add you to His church. Keep studying and growing in the Word every day of your life.

Do you have a close, loving, peaceful relationship with God? Do you have peace of mind and heart inside? God hasn't left you; it may be that you have left God. The greatest need of our time is to know God and to draw close to Him again by listening and obeying His Word. Won't you do that?

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