

A Light in the Valley

February 2020
Volume 6
Issue 2

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

God Has Spoken...

by: Kris Brewer

The letter to the Hebrews begins with:

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... (Hebrews 1:1-2)

The writer here related some very important points, which impact our understanding of scripture and the authority of God related through it.

First, we need to recognize the fact that God has spoken. The implications of God speaking to mankind are significant. If there is a God, and if He has spoken, it seems imperative that we listen to Him! How foolish for us, as the creation, to even consider ignoring the voice of the divine! There is, it seems obvious, a reason that God has spoken to His creation. He has an expectation that those who are spoken to will be obedient to the instructions that He has spoken. Paul, as he wrote to the Gala-

tian brethren, was bewildered by the fact that some were being convinced they had no obligation to be obedient to the instructions that were received from God:

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? (Galatians 3:1)

The mere fact that God has chosen to communicate with mankind should be enough for us to realize that He expects us to listen.

It is beyond the scope of this study to establish the authenticity of the scriptures and to show that it is from God. That has been expressed elsewhere clearly. The Hebrew writer began his treatise by assuming his reader accepted this premise, and so we will here do the same. God has spoken, and having spoken, He has the expectation that we will listen, and obey the instructions that He has provided.

Next, the author of Hebrews declared that God had spoken “at various times and in various ways...” This is an interesting phrase, and conveys more than the English translation would necessarily relate. The part of the phrase that is translated as “at various times” is the word πολυμερῶς [polumeros /pol·oo·mer·oce/].¹ While the idea in English seems to mean that God spoke at different times, it actually meant something more than that. The word is defined as:

pertaining to that which occurs in many parts—‘fragmentary, in many parts.’²

While this word can have other meanings, it seems that the inspired writer was conveying the idea that the revelation process from God, “in time past” had been done in a piecemeal type way. God gave a little bit of His mind at a time, instead of revealing everything at once. This is easily confirmed by examining the scriptures! To illustrate, consider how He revealed some of His mind through Moses, but later He would reveal something further through the prophets.

The writer here continued to say that God spoke in “various ways...to the fathers by the prophets.” The idea here is that God used different manners, or modes, of revealing His mind to the people. He did not deliver all of it in the same manner at the same time. He gave a little of Himself at a time, giving opportunity for the people to continually build up their knowledge (and therefore their faith) in God.

The contrast to this way of revealing His mind is that “in these last days” He has “spoken to us by His Son.” This contrast should be understood in a couple of different ways. First, the revelation through the Son is to be understood as a far superior method than the revelation to the fathers through the prophets. One of the recurring themes that would be explored in the letter to the Hebrews is the superiority of Christ to anything and everything that had come before Him. When it has been revealed that the message of God has come through the Son, that message immediately surpasses any and all messages that had been delivered through the prophets.

Second, the revelation through the Son is to be understood to be complete. The many messages sent piecemeal through the prophets were always intended to be incomplete. They were pointing to something greater; something complete! Rather than giving just a bit of His mind here and there, and from time to time, God re-

1 Strong, James. *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon 1995* : n. pag. Print.

2 Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene Albert Nida. *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains 1996* : 613. Print.

vealed His mind in its completeness. Jude conveyed the idea in this manner:

Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

There was not going to be more to receive at a later time. The faith, just as God had intended for it to be, was “once for all delivered to the saints.” They could have confidence in the message that they had received. Paul was addressing the same point with the Galatian brethren:

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:6-9)

Paul could convey a confidence to his audience that they had received the truth. It was complete. So, if anyone came teaching something new (perhaps claiming a new revelation, or another revelation) they could have confidence that it was not the will of God. God had sent all that they needed, and anything new or different was not to be accepted.

Understanding these concepts will have a significant impact on our applications of scripture. When we accept that God has indeed spoken to us, we will treat it as His word, and not the word of men:

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 (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

That which is God’s word is innately authoritative. We do just what He has said to do because He said to do it. We might question the word of men, or even outright ignore it. But when it comes to the word of God, we should have a respect for it that demands obedience.

We are also not going to be looking for further revelation. When we understand that God has spoken through His son, and has finished speaking, we know that He is not going to suddenly present something else to us. In today’s religious environ-

ment, we often hear people declare that God has spoken to them. They claim to have some new message, some new instruction from the Lord. God told us, when He spoke through His son, that He would not do that to us! We can have confidence that God has given us everything we need to be pleasing to Him. It was delivered “once for all” in the first century, so anything that comes in a new revelation, or in a claimed new episode of God speaking to someone today, can easily be dismissed. Paul said that if anyone spoke anything different than what had already been received, “let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8-9). No one is exempt from this condemnation. This makes it easy to differentiate between truth and “modern day revelation.” Whether it be the whole of the Mormon faith (built on a “New Revela-

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tion of Jesus Christ” through Joseph Smith), or the next door neighbor who dismisses everything written in scripture because “God spoke to me and told me I didn’t have to do that,” one who trusts the revelation of God, and treats it as the word of God, will reject these ideas and turn back to Him.

The Hebrew writer provides for us, as he begins this epistle, a word of great comfort. For all of the great things that God had done through the prophets for the people of old, they did not compare to what He was doing for His people through His Son. In fact, those prophets of old wanted to be able to

see the culmination of their message, the fulfillment of their words through the Christ, the one who would bring the final revelation of God (1 Peter 1:10-12). If He were just going to keep doing the same thing, with the same type of message, then the message through the Son would not be greater than what had already been delivered! So, we are provided great comfort in knowing we do not have to wonder if God is going to spring some new message on us. We don’t have to worry that some aspect of truth is going to be revealed in a way and in a place that is not accessible to us. We can have confidence that the gospel that saved souls in the first century is the same gospel that will save souls today. All we have to do is delve into His wonderful word and be obedient to His instructions. Will we regard His word as it truly is? It is the authoritative word of God, and He intends for us to respect it as such, and to obey it as such!

Hosea's Plight...

by: Kris Brewer

Recently, we began a study of the Minor Prophets. As we began studying the book of Hosea, it became immediately evident that God had high expectations for Hosea. One who reads the book cannot help but feel for the prophet as he receives the instructions of God and seeks to put them into practice. Hosea was told to do what had to be one of the most difficult things ever proclaimed to a man of God. Hosea was told to “take...a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry...” (Hosea 1:2). From the beginning of Hosea’s marriage, he knew that his wife would be unfaithful to him. He knew that at least some of his children would really be the result of his wife’s unfaithfulness (the true children of another man). And yet, Hosea did just what the Lord commanded him to do. And everything that God said would happen, happened to Hosea. His wife was unfaithful, and she bore children to him that were the offspring of another man. What was the point?

There are two thoughts that we want to explore briefly here. The first is that we learn a lesson from Hosea that we should do whatever the Lord commands of us. True servants of God will not pick and choose among the instructions of the Lord. True servants do just what God commands, even if they do not understand why the instruction is necessary, or if they do not like or agree with the instruction. Hosea did not question God’s instructions or motives. He simply did what He was told to do. We have the same responsibility today. When we read God’s instructions in the New Testament, we should simply submit. Obedience is easy when we like the instructions or agree with them. It is much more difficult when we don’t like them, or disagree. We are not really obedient to God only when we like the instructions. We are, in that case, really only being selfish!

Study Opportunities

Sunday Bible Study: 10:00 AM
Sunday Worship Assembly: 11:00 AM

Meeting At

Homewood Suites of Bozeman
1023 E Baxter Ln,
Bozeman, MT 59715

Everyone Welcome!

The second thought that we want to explore here is the symbolism of Hosea's obedient actions. God was not simply trying to make Hosea suffer. His actions meant something, and should have served as a lesson and a warning to the children of Israel. God's instructions for Hosea paralleled the very actions of the people of Israel. God told Hosea to take a woman who would not be faithful to him, and raise children that were not his own. In Ezekiel chapter 16, God related what He had done for His people. There, He wrote about how He had rescued His people from certain destruction at the time of their "birth":

"Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: "Your birth and your nativity are from the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. As for your nativity, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed in water to cleanse you; you were not rubbed with salt nor wrapped in swaddling cloths. No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you; but you were thrown out into the open field, when you yourself were loathed on the day you were born. "And when I passed by you and saw you struggling in your own blood, I said to you in your blood, 'Live!' Yes, I said to you in your blood, 'Live!' I made you thrive like a plant in the field; and you grew, matured, and became very beautiful. Your breasts were formed, your hair grew, but you were naked and bare. "When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine," says the Lord GOD. "Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil. I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk. I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists, and a chain on your neck. And I put a jewel in your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate pastry of fine flour, honey, and oil. You were exceedingly beautiful, and succeeded to royalty. Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through My splendor which I had bestowed on you," says the Lord GOD. (Ezekiel 16:2-14)

But, even as God did all of this for His people, they would still not remain faithful to Him. They began to play the harlot with "everyone passing by who would have it" (Ezekiel 16:15). They showed no loyalty to the Lord, and gave themselves over to the idols of all the peoples around them. It did not matter how much love and compassion God showed to His people, they still turned their backs on Him. Much of the rest of Ezekiel chapter 16 depicts just how bad the idolatry of the people got. They involved themselves in every type of idolatry that they could find. They

even went so far as to sacrifice their children to Molech:

“Moreover you took your sons and your daughters, whom you bore to Me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. Were your acts of harlotry a small matter, that you have slain My children and offered them up to them by causing them to pass through the fire? (Ezekiel 16:20–21)

The seriousness of this is emphasized by God’s reminder to them:

And in all your abominations and acts of harlotry you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, struggling in your blood (Ezekiel 16:22).

In their spiritual adultery, they had completely forgotten about what God had done for them. He had rescued them. He had saved them. They had been struggling in their own blood, and helpless. Yet, they forgot all about that and turned to the idols around them.

While Ezekiel’s prophecy would come after Hosea’s, the parallels are evident. Hosea was prophesying to the people of Israel, and hoping to turn them back to Jehovah. Ezekiel’s words were for the people of Judah, long after their sister Israel had been taken captive. By reading Ezekiel’s prophecy, we can see that God was illustrating the unfaithfulness of His people through the figure of the marriage of Hosea. Of course, God made that evident even when giving Hosea his instructions. He told Hosea that He wanted him to do this because “the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the Lord” (Hosea 1:2). They had to see the message in a way they could understand. Watching Hosea’s pain, even in the face of unbelievable love for his wife, had to be a striking thing for the people around him. Ultimately, the message did not induce a change among the Israelites. They still refused to repent and turn back to God, even after seeing such a loving example from the prophet.

Hopefully, we are not like the Israelites. We should be able to see what God has done for us, taking us from the very grasp of sin and death, rescuing us through the great love that He has for us (John 3:16 comes to mind). Having such love displayed for us, how can we turn to something that is not of God? How can we reject His instructions for us? Our idolatry is probably not going to be literally turning to other gods, but do we allow other things to come between us and Him? When we serve something other than the true God, we are guilty of the same type of spiritual adultery as the Israelites! After being rescued, will we turn to harlotry? Let us learn the lesson that the Israelites failed to learn. Let us devote ourselves to God’s service!

Daily Bible Reading

March 2020

March 2	Hebrews 1	March 17	Hebrews 9:1-12
March 3	Hebrews 2:1-8	March 18	Hebrews 9:13-28
March 4	Hebrews 2:9-18	March 19	Hebrews 10:1-18
March 5	Hebrews 3	March 20	Hebrews 10:19-25
March 6	Hebrews 4	March 23	Hebrews 10:26-39
March 9	Hebrews 5	March 24	Hebrews 11:1-12
March 10	Hebrews 6:1-8	March 25	Hebrews 11:13-25
March 11	Hebrews 6:9-20	March 26	Hebrews 11:26-12:3
March 12	Hebrews 7:1-11	March 27	Hebrews 12:4-17
March 13	Hebrews 7:12-28	March 30	Hebrews 12:18-29
March 16	Hebrews 8	March 31	Hebrews 13

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