

## Does God Speak to People Today?

(This excerpt is from [\*If God Knows What I Need, Why Should I Pray?\*](#) chapter 13, "God Wants to Speak to You")

Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27). The "sheep" are His followers, and Jesus said we will hear His voice speaking to us. God would like to speak to everyone, but many people don't believe in Him or they don't want to hear what He has to say. Some people don't hear His voice because they believe a theology that asserts the Lord doesn't speak to people today except through the Bible.

Some people believe God doesn't speak individually to people today because we have the entire Bible to read. They presuppose that the Lord only speaks through the Bible and therefore conclude that any revelation outside the Bible cannot be from God.

However, reading the Bible doesn't guarantee that He will speak to you through it. Even though the Pharisees continually studied and memorized the Scriptures, Jesus told them, "You have neither heard [God's] voice at any time . . . you search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life . . ." (John 5:37, 39). God never spoke to them through the Scriptures or in any other way, for that matter.

Adherents for this incorrect doctrine, which teaches that God doesn't speak today, usually base their arguments on this Scripture: "For we know in part and prophesy in part, but **when the perfect** comes, the partial will be done away" (1 Corinthians 13:9–10). They assume that "the perfect" in this verse refers to the Bible, meaning that Christians didn't need any further information from God once the complete New Testament had been written.

While it's certainly true that the Scriptures are God's recorded revelation to us, that doesn't mean He is limited to speaking only through them. If you have been taught this theology, would you **please carefully consider these six problems with that interpretation?**

### Does God Only Speak through the Bible?

**Problem 1. Nowhere in the Scriptures does it prophesy that a Bible will be written.** An important principle in interpreting the Scriptures is to read the passage for what it actually says and not what you think it says. The phrase has been translated by Greek scholars as "when the perfect comes" and not "when the Bible is written and completed." Replacing the word "perfect" with the word "Bible" is altering the Scriptures for the sole purpose of substantiating a particular theology.

**Problem 2. God does speak through the words in the Bible, but that does not exclude Him from also speaking information to our minds.** This does not mean that additional Scriptures or other books can be added to the Bible. It simply means the Scriptures give general instructions to everyone, but the Holy Spirit can give specific guidance to each individual concerning what to do in their unique situations. The Holy Spirit will never speak in a way that contradicts the written Word, which He inspired.

**Problem 3. The meaning of "when the perfect comes" is found a couple of verses later:** "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known" (1 Corinthians 13:12). Does anyone on earth "know fully," even if they have memorized every word in the Bible? No. "Face to face" means when we stand face to face with Jesus in eternity. If "the perfect" meant the Bible, it would say "face to page." When we stand face to face with Him in heaven one day, then our knowledge will be expanded and we will know completely just as we have been completely known by the Lord.

**Problem 4. It is from the Scriptures that we learn that the Holy Spirit will speak to us.** Claiming that God only speaks through the Bible contradicts many other Scriptures, particularly those concerning the role of the Holy Spirit. If you believe the Bible is God's Word, then you must also acknowledge Jesus told us what the Holy Spirit would do:

"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" (John 16:12–13).

**Why would Jesus tell us the Holy Spirit would speak to us if He cannot speak to us today?** Are we to believe what Jesus taught, or should we believe a man-made theology that insists God doesn't speak to us today? That idea denies what Jesus clearly taught, which is revealed in the Scriptures.

**Problem 5.** To maintain that the Lord only speaks through the Scriptures **assumes that every word God speaks must be recorded in the Scriptures**. But this isn't true. God spoke many messages through prophets in Old Testament times, but most of those words aren't recorded in the Bible:

Then Saul sent messengers to take David, but when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, with Samuel standing and presiding over them, the *Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul; and they also prophesied.* (1 Samuel 19:20)

Even though the Spirit of God spoke words through them, we don't know exactly what they said because it's not recorded in the Scriptures. The Lord also spoke through the prophet Agabus in the New Testament about a coming famine (Acts 11:28), but his exact words aren't written in the Bible.

**Not even all the words of Jesus are recorded in the Scriptures.** He said, "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. . . therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me." (John 12:49–50).

The Father spoke through Jesus and yet **many of His words are not recorded in the Scriptures**. The apostle John wrote in his gospel that Jesus performed many miracles, and obviously spoke many words, which are not recorded:

Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book . . . And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written. (John 20:30, 21:25).

Are we to assume that since Jesus' miracles are not recorded, that He didn't do them? No. Or that since not all His words are written in the Bible, they weren't from God? Certainly not.

**Problem 6.** The doctrine that God only speaks through the Bible **places a restriction of the Lord's desire to communicate with us and eliminates much of what He wants to say**. In His confrontation with the devil, Jesus quotes the Old Testament Scripture, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

The Bible tells us that we can ask God for wisdom and He will give it (James 1:5). Why would you pray for wisdom if every answer could be found by reading the Bible? Why would you pray for wisdom if your belief system dictated that the Lord doesn't speak to us today? (Can you see how this non-Scriptural doctrine prevents people from seeking God's help?) James isn't talking about reading the Bible, but receiving insights and guidance from the Lord about what to do in specific situations.

## How Does God Speak to Us?

God's written Word is the clearest revelation through which He will speak, but Jesus said the Holy Spirit is sent to speak to us concerning issues not mentioned in the Bible. God's Word gives **general guidance** to everyone, but the Holy Spirit can give you **specific guidance** concerning your present-day situation. The guidance of the Spirit will always be in harmony with God's Word.

Sometimes God speaks to people in an audible voice (see Mark 1:11, Matthew 17:5, Acts 26:14, 1 Samuel 3). However, speaking in an audible voice is not His normal way of communicating with us today. **The Lord doesn't need to use a human voice to speak to us**. He can communicate with us by putting thoughts and ideas in our minds. In addition to the Scriptures, the Lord can speak to us in these three ways.

### 1. God can speak through thoughts in your mind.

Jesus once asked His disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 15:16–17). Peter probably thought that he came up with that idea on his own. But Jesus informed him that His Father in heaven had revealed His identity as the Son of God. The Lord spoke to Peter by putting the idea into his mind (see Matthew 16:13–17).

When God directed Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the city wall, he said, "I did not tell anyone what my God was putting in my mind to do for Jerusalem" (Nehemiah 2:12). After the wall was built, Nehemiah said, "God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles" (Nehemiah 7:5). The Lord communicated what He wanted done by putting thoughts in Nehemiah's mind and heart.

## **2. God can speak through desires in your heart.**

Suppose you're looking for employment and must choose between two jobs. Both look like great opportunities, so you pray and ask the Lord which job to take. You understand that He knows the future consequences of both possibilities and He wants to lead you down the best path. So how will you know which job to choose? He will tug at your heart and increase your desire for the correct job.

Psalm 37:4 says, "Delight yourself in the LORD and He will give you the desires of your heart." This doesn't mean that everything you want is God's will. It means that when you find your joy in living for God, He places His desires in your heart so you will want what He wants. Once your heart is fully devoted to the Lord, He will lead you without any hindrance or resistance from you.

When I was a new believer, I thought it was selfish to have any desires of my own. I finally realized that I would always have desires as long as I was alive, but I simply needed those desires to be channeled in the right direction. The Holy Spirit lives inside every believer in Christ and will act as the "wanter" inside your heart. "Following your heart" only works after you have surrendered yourself to do God's will. When you choose to be controlled by the Holy Spirit, He will direct your heart and lead you down the right path.

That's how He leads some people to go overseas to be foreign missionaries, while He tells others to stay where they are right now and faithfully serve Him in their current situation.

## **3. God can speak through an "inner knowing" in your heart.**

The Lord can speak to you as an "inner knowing" that is similar to having an intuition or a gut feeling. One person described it as, "You know that you know that you know."

During the earliest days of Christianity, the apostles and elders gathered together for the council at Jerusalem to determine the church's stance on circumcision. After much debate, they finally came to a decision.

It seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch. . . . It seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you. . . . For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden. (Acts 15:22, 25, 28)

These church leaders were praying together to know God's will. Three times the Scripture mentions that "it seemed good" to them. Sometimes God confirms what He is saying by what simply seems right. You sense in your spirit it's the right thing to do. This assurance comes from the Holy Spirit bearing witness with your spirit. Again, just because something seems good to you doesn't always mean that God is saying yes. The elders prayed through their decision and sought the Lord, and so should you.

The Lord wants to talk with you and guide you through this life, so don't harden your heart when He speaks. "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." (Hebrews 4:7). Keep your heart in tune with Him and you will be surprised at what He will reveal to you.

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