

HOW DOES GOD SPEAK TO US TODAY?

By Denver Cheddie

At no point in history was God ever silent. God has always communicated with his people in some way or another. We can be rest assured that if God wants something said, it will be heard. It thus behooves us not to determine whether God speaks today, but how He does it.

Even a cursory reading of the Prophets would reveal that God used a diversity of means to communicate with his people. Sometimes he did so through dreams, visions, an audible voice, an antiphony etc. There were also occasions when the Bible just stated that God spoke to a prophet without saying how. All we know is that however God did it, it was unmistakable. There was no doubt in the mind of the prophet or his audience that God had indeed spoken through him. The only exceptions were those who had political reasons not to hear God's prophets. But the bottom line is that there was no formula to dictate how God spoke, and neither is there any today.

In the OT God spoke to his people through his chosen prophets. Whenever the King wanted to know something, he would request that the prophet consult God. Some kings even had their own sycophantic prophets of convenience. In the NT, God has spoken to us through Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:2). Afterward he continued to speak through the apostles. He was recognized by the early believers who continued in the apostles doctrine (Acts 2:14). Jesus had promised his apostles that there were things he could

not reveal to them at the time he was on earth, but would do so later through the Holy Spirit (John 16:12-15). There really is not a vast record in the Bible of God speaking to the average citizen X in a direct manner. Most of God's speaking as recorded in the Bible pertains to the plan of salvation – from the formation of Israel to the establishment of the church.

So how did God speak in the periods when there were no prophets or apostles? During the inter-testamental period (period between the OT and the NT), the Jews had canonized the writings of the Prophets and had a complete OT. There was a great awareness of the written Word of God during Jesus' time on earth. In the absence of a prophetic voice, the people turned to the written word for divine insight. In fact, in Proverbs 29:18, where there is no vision the people perish, the vision was referring to the written word of God (in context).

In our time when there are no long genuine apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20), we can be likewise instructed. In fact, the superfluity of false apostles and prophets demands that we be so. There are numerous passages which employ a present continuing tense when citing other scripture (Matt. 22:43; Acts 2:17; 7:48; 8:34; Rom. 10:11-21; 15:12). God **speaks** to us (*present tense*) through his Word. In the Word, we find his thoughts and ideas, and as we study it and meditate on it, they become ingrained in us. We no longer need a voice, we have God's mind. The Holy Spirit helps us in this regard, to remember the word and apply it when we need it. Sometimes he causes certain scriptures to stand out at particular times. This is how God speaks to us today. God thinks to us.

But this is just too simple for some Christians. Many think that because we have the indwelling Holy Spirit, we hear directly from the throne room of God, and many use this to justify the most bizarre of revelations. How I wish the average charismatic Christian could develop just half a brain so they can see through some of their fallacious and malicious leaders. Here are the exact words of one of Benny Hinn's "revelations":

Man, I feel revelation knowledge already coming on me here. Lift your hands. Something new is going to happen here today. I felt it just as I walked down here. Holy Spirit, take over in the name of Jesus.... God the Father, ladies and gentlemen, is a person; and he is a triune being by Himself separate from the Son and the Holy Ghost. Say, what did you say? Hear it, hear it, hear it. See, God the Father is a person, God the Son is a person, God the Holy Ghost is a person. But each on of them is a triune being by Himself. If I can shock you – and maybe I should – there's nine of them. Huh, what did you say? Let me explain: God the Father, ladies and gentlemen, is a person with his own personal spirit, with his own personal soul, and his own personal spirit-body. You say, Huh, I never heard that. Well you think you're in this church to hear things you've heard for the last 50 years? You can't argue with the Word, can you? It's all in the Word.[1]

When questioned about these statements, Hinn conceded, "That was a very dumb statement.... I told my church the very next week that the statement was wrong." So was it the Holy Spirit who give him that dumb revelation? Hinn acknowledged that God had nothing to do with his revelation, rather ***it was something he had read somewhere***. [2] I give this example not to say that Benny Hinn is of the devil or that he will never change, but much of what people claim were revealed to them by God, may very well have been something that they heard or read previously and was stored in their

subconscious. Others use the "voice of God" conveniently to manipulate others or outdo fellow ministers. Then again much of what happens in charismatic circles is a spectacle designed to elude applause from the crowds, and they call it anointing.

A Bible school student asked me for advice concerning God's plan to provide her with a husband. I instructed her that there was no scripture in the Bible where God made any such definite promise to every individual believer. God promised to give us guidance but finding a spouse is our job. "No" she interrupted, "God revealed this to me personally." I then cautioned her to be sure it was really God who revealed that and not her imaginations playing tricks on her.

Now it was very possible that God did reveal this to her, but I know so many people in her situation who were mistaken in that regard. Does the "little voice inside" always tell us exactly what we want to hear? If it did, wouldn't that suggest it is the voice of the flesh rather than God? Jeremiah lived at a time when there were many false prophets telling the people that there was no danger, God would grant them peace (Jer 14:13,14). On one particular occasion, the false prophet Hananiah prophesied that God would deliver Israel from the Babylonians, and everyone loved his message. Even the prophet Jeremiah said, amen. But after he left, God revealed to him that Hananiah had prophesied a lie (Jer 28). The word of Hananiah had contradicted the written word of God, which clearly stated that if the people rebelled against God, God would deliver them into the hands of their enemies (Deut 28:25). God does not always tell us what we want to hear. Very often God tells us the exact opposite of what we want. One sure way of

knowing that a voice is not God's, is when it says everything that everyone wants to hear, especially the sinners in Zion (Isa 33:14).

We often look for God to move in an out of the ordinary manner. We often miss the supernatural looking for the spectacular. God speaks to us today through His written Word. We must read it, study it, meditate on it. When we do so, logically we learn more of His mind. Then the Holy Spirit makes that Word applicable to us at the right times.

The condition of many believers today is epitomized by their misinterpretation of Proverbs 29:18 – *"where there is no vision the people perish: but he who keeps the law, happy is he."* They think they need to see some elaborate vision or they would perish. But the term *"no vision"* is contrasted with *"keeping the law"* in the second half of the verse. It is obvious that the vision spoken of is an enlightenment of God's written Word. That is how God speaks to us today.

[1] Benny Hinn, "Benny Hinn" program on TBN (3 October 1990).

[2] Randy Frame, "Best-selling Author Admits Mistakes, Vows Changes," Christianity Today (28 October 1991), 44-45.

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