

## God Speaks To Man.

Text: 1 Pet 1:10-12

Suggested Hymns:

262, 263, 261, 264, 266

1) How Does God Speak To Man?

2) What Does God Say To Man?

3) Are We Listening When God Speaks To Us?

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 1 Peter 1:10-12, <sup>10</sup> *Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, <sup>11</sup> searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.*

<sup>12</sup> *To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven -- things which angels desire to look into.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today we are continuing our series on the Nicene Creed. Part 12 focuses on the words, *I believe in the Holy Spirit ... who spoke by the prophets.*

One of God's magnificent gifts to mankind is speech. This is a gift we often take for granted. Parents come close to a proper appreciation when they thrill to hear the first words spoken by their firstborn child.

Travellers in a strange country also learn to appreciate speech when they find themselves unable to communicate with people in their own language. Man's relationship with man can be improved by effective use of the gift of speech.

This gift of God should become all the more precious to us when we realise that God Almighty uses this gift for us too. God speaks to man. Although He possesses unlimited power and authority, God does not wall Himself off from man by a lofty disdain, but He speaks to man. And He listens to man speak in

prayer. This overwhelming thought shows us that God is God, for all the idols that man may try to create are speechless, dumb, and lifeless.

We confess this wondrous truth in the Third Article of the Nicene Creed in the words: *“I believe in the Holy Spirit ... who spoke by the prophets.”* We listen to Simon Peter, the apostle, as he treats this matter in more detail in the words of our text. May the Holy Spirit speak to us as we praise and worship Him for the fact that God Speaks to Man. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### 1. How Does God Speak To Man?

This seems like an almost incredible relationship between Almighty God and man, who is so insignificant. *How does God speak to man?* The writer to the Hebrews supplies us with the answer in the opening words of his letter, *“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets.”*<sup>1</sup> God chose a variety of means of communicating with man.

God spoke directly to some of the fathers. Scripture records that God was in the habit of speaking with Adam and Eve while they were in the Garden of Eden. God spoke to Cain when He accused him of murdering his brother. God spoke to Noah when He announced the coming destructive flood. God invited Abraham to try to count the stars to illustrate the countless number of spiritual descendants he was to have.

God’s speaking with Moses was an awesome and earth-shaking experience for the people of Israel, who huddled together in fear at the base of Mount Sinai. How God spoke to these human beings is not known to us. We just know that God spoke and they listened.

God also spoke to man by His works of great might, wisdom, and mercy. This is the message of the psalmist’s song, *“For the word of the LORD is right, And all His work is done in truth.”*<sup>2</sup> God’s Word and work are synonymous. There was God’s creative work. The writer to the Hebrews states that *“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.”*<sup>3</sup> The psalmist said it earlier in Psalm 33:6, *“By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.”* God’s handiwork is His way of speaking to man of His power and wisdom.

Then God chose a special people so that He could speak through them. His mighty Word came to His chosen people, Israel, in His loving and righteous dealings with them. He opened the Red Sea so that they could escape their bondage in Egypt. He provided them with food every day of their long journey through the wilderness. He protected them against hostile and powerful enemies.

He finally brought them to the land He had promised them a long time before. He had made His covenant with them that He promised to be their God and they were to be His people. These mighty deeds became an added way in which God spoke to His people and showed His justice and mercy to all nations.

God “*spoke by the prophets.*” This is yet another means by which God spoke to man. He selected certain men to stand in His place before the world to speak His message. This is the true meaning of the word “prophet,” one who speaks in the place of another.

In our text Peter tells that “*Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully*” under the guidance of God Himself so that their proclamations always rested in the context of “thus says the Lord.”

In 2 Peter 1:21, Peter states that *holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*. This was the ultimate authority of the prophets’ words. They did not speak for themselves, but they uttered the words which the Lord God commanded them to speak. God’s people listened to the prophets and received their words as the Word of the Lord Himself.

Peter tells us that these prophets at times knew that they were God’s spokesmen. He writes in our text, *it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven*. God’s Holy Spirit made the prophets God’s mouthpieces, and by His command they spoke and wrote the words which have been preserved by God’s people ever since that time.

The apostle Paul says that the sacred writings are inspired by God. Thus Scripture records the acts and revelations of God to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

God's ultimate Word to mankind is Jesus Christ, His Son. The writer to the Hebrews said that *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.*<sup>4</sup>

John deals with this staggering mystery in the opening words of his gospel: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth."*<sup>5</sup>

Moses promised that God would raise up a great Prophet, and Peter proclaimed that Jesus of Nazareth was the fulfilment of that promise.<sup>6</sup> Every word Jesus spoke was the Word of God. Every deed Jesus did was the Word of God. God's entire revelation, His speaking to man, comes to a brilliant and glorious focus in the Person of Jesus Christ, His Son and our Saviour.

It is Jesus who makes the words of the prophets authoritative for us. Jesus is the fulfilment of all their prophecies. The Holy Scripture is our beloved Book because it brings us God's communication to sinful man in the Person and work of His Son.

God speaks the last word to every question man can raise. Jesus claimed, *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away."*<sup>7</sup>

## **2. What Does God Say To Man?**

Our next question might be, *What is it that God says to man?* Since God is the Speaker, what He says should be of great importance to us.

God tells man who he is. This is one of the profound questions that confronts man: who he is. It hurts a person when he feels that he is living a lonely and useless life. The growing complexity of our society, the bounding population figures, and all the new inventions for compiling and storing data only add to man's loneliness.

But God speaks to man and makes each person important because of His concern. Man is the crown of God's creative work. God gave man the power to subdue the earth and share with Him in the act of creation. Man is precious in God's eyes.

But God must also tell man that he did not live up to this high calling and destiny to serve his Creator in worship and praise. Man turned his back on

God's will, tried to be a god himself, and thereby destroyed this close and intimate relationship which God had planned. God tells sinful man that the payment for this sin and for all his sins, in which he perpetuates this estrangement from God, is death. Only a meaningless life and an eternal death follow upon this broken communication with God. God tells you and me how we live our lives in this estrangement today.

But the exultancy in Peter's message in our text comes from the fact that he spoke the good news of God's grace, of God's plan of salvation for sinful man. As another of God's prophets, Peter points out how we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

He tells us how God counteracted this horrible doom of eternal death which follows a meaningless life of suffering, pain, and tears. Peter sings the beautiful song of praise which the prophets of old sang about God's mighty acts of mercy and grace.

This great plan has its climax in the Person of Jesus. Our text says that *Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.*

It had come to this, that God's Son suffered in man's place. He had to submit to the indignities of man's insults, subject Himself to space and time, allow Himself to become the object of men's scorn and God's hatred while He carried every man's sins on His own innocent shoulders.

And Jesus completed this work. He drank the cup of suffering to the last bitter dregs. He cried out, *"It is finished,"* claiming victory over all evil and the demands of the law of God. God glorified Him for His work well done. We read in Philippians 2:9-11 that *God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

What wonderful news this is! This is the good news, the Gospel of God's rescue of sinful men and the gift of eternal life.

This is what God says to man. The “Holy Spirit spoke by the prophets.” God’s Holy Spirit gives wings to the words of the good news of salvation. In our text Peter refers to the Holy Spirit as sent from heaven to do this very work, “*the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.*”

This was the blessed result of that Pentecost Sunday when Christ’s church had its spectacular beginning in the miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised His disciples the Holy Spirit, who would be their Teacher and Counsellor.

### **3. Are We Listening When God Speaks To Us?**

We have one more question to ask: *Are we listening when God speaks to us?* Indeed, every person is surrounded by the acts of God and the evidences of God’s kingly authority. But not everyone hears God speak to him in these acts. Many people listen to the words of the Bible without hearing God speak to them in these words. Some people feel it their duty to contradict the Word of God. Some people believe their own words are far superior to God’s words. Some people make the discoveries of science stand in opposition to the things that God says.

Even among those who profess their belief in the words of the Nicene Creed: “*I believe in one God, the Father Almighty ... and in one Lord Jesus Christ ... and in the Holy Spirit, who spoke by the prophets,*” there are those who join the ranks of the doubters and scoffers.

Sinful man loves to do this, for in this way he can be king in his own right. Do we sin in this way? Yes, when we resist God’s clear accusation of our sin. We do this when we try to justify our lives by our own works of righteousness. We join the scoffers when we oppose God’s claim on all our things and earthly possessions and selfishly try to keep more for ourselves.

In weakness of faith we often refuse to take God at His word in His promises for success in our work for Him and His church. We are guilty of continuing a deep sorrow in the face of His own true comfort.

Let us conclude with Prayer: O God, forgive us our sin of pride and deliberate deafness to Your Word. By Your Holy Spirit make our faith burn brighter within us. Open our hearts to Your Word that we may hear You speak.

Grant us the ability to respond to Your Word in ringing affirmations of praise and adoration and worshipful obedience, world without end. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 1:1

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 33:4

<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 11:3

<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 1:2

<sup>5</sup> John 1:1, 14

<sup>6</sup> Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:22

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 24:35