

God's Voice in the Living Word

by James Blaine Chapman

God has spoken to humanity through His Son, Jesus Christ, in various ways, including His miraculous birth, spotless life, peerless teachings, marvelous miracles, high priestly sufferings, and triumphant resurrection.

Scripture: John 1:14, John 3:16, Acts 2:1, Romans 6:23, 1 Corinthians 1:18, Hebrews 1:1, Hebrews 2:3, 1 Peter 2:22

Topics: "Jesus Christ", "Salvation Message"

Description

James Blaine Chapman preaches about how God has spoken to us through His Son, Jesus Christ, emphasizing the miraculous birth, spotless life, peerless teachings, marvelous miracles, high priestly sufferings, triumphant resurrection, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. He highlights the importance of understanding and heeding the message of salvation brought by Jesus, the ultimate revelation of God to humanity, and warns against neglecting this great salvation that has been confirmed through signs, wonders, miracles, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son (Hebrews 1:1, 2).

There is an indispensable intellectual phase in the approach to God. There are some things a man must know and believe before he can come to God with his heart. One must know something about God before he can know God. To make clear these essentials, God has laid tribute to every form of speech in word and in writing in the past, so that we have a Bible that is both simple and profound, even as we have about us a book of nature that the child can approach, but the sage cannot exhaust. Our Bible has in it in close proximity the twenty-third Psalm and the Book of Job; John 3:16 and the Book of Revelation; the story of the conversion of Zacchaeus and the Book of Romans.

But although God in former times used the prophets as active agents in revealing His will, Jesus Christ Himself is called "the Word" (John 1), and the fullest possible revelation of God to men has been made through Him. The saying that God "hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" clearly indicates that there is to be no further and no other revelation until His coming in judgment power.

1. God hath spoken unto us by his Son:

He has spoken unto us in the miraculous birth of His Son into this world. Jesus was born as no other ever was born or ever will be born. Those who would pass this point as though it does not matter should stop

and think again. It is not enough for us to say that no matter how He was conceived and brought forth, it is enough that He came. No, God hath spoken unto us by the miraculous birth of His Son.

The manner of Jesus' birth was made the subject of detailed prophecies before the event came to pass. This was both in order that men might know Him when He came, and because there was no other way that He could come and fulfill the demands of both Sin-bearer and Saviour. God was Father, Mary was mother, and in the birth there came into being the unique God-man who could take our sins upon Himself, and yet be able to save to the uttermost all them that come to God by Him. There is no use to look for scientific explanation of the virgin birth of our Lord. The explanation is in the infinite wisdom, love and power of God. But the very manner of Christ's coming is a revelation both of what God is and of how He would transform us into His likeness. In Jesus God was made flesh and dwelt among us.

2. God hath spoken to us in the spotless life of Jesus. Even the enemies of Jesus have always had to say, "I find no fault in him." The records of His life show that He was faultless in both word and deed, and the philosophy of human action requires that He be pure within that such a course should show forth in Him. In the pressure and care of the busiest day, His conduct and words brought commendation to the highest ideals. The record is summarized in the sentence, "He went about doing good." In the intimate circle of His closest friends He maintained an integrity that justified in them the deepest confidence.

Sometimes doubtful men have tried to claim that Jesus was a myth -- the creation of mass imagination. But in making such an explanation it becomes necessary to say either that the inventors were good but unbalanced men, or else bad, conniving deceivers. And neither of these horns of the dilemma is tenable. The Christ story shows too much genius to be the invention of unbalanced minds, and no bad connivers would be interested in foisting off such a character on the world, seeing His influence would be always against the designs of the inventors.

For little children, youths, people in mature life, and those bent with age, Jesus is the example. He is so near to the weeping penitent that the extended hand may touch Him. Yet He goes on before the holiest saint and beckons to a higher plane. He is so touched with feeling for our infirmities that the veriest beginner instinctively looks to Him for sympathy and help. Yet the dying saint turns to Him in faith as his sun sinks behind the horizon and meekly says, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." Yes, God has spoken unto us by the spotless life of His Son, and by this voice hath condemned sin in us, and yet hath told us that we need not always be sinners, seeing there is a sinless One who is willing and able to lift us up, make us new, and give us power to walk as He walked. No sinner could save us. Only a spotless Son could be our Saviour.

3. God hath spoken to us through the peerless teachings of His Son. Even the earliest words of Jesus have never required revision. When He spoke, the last word was said on the subject. Since Jesus spoke, men have often gone a long way around, but in the end they have come back to say again what the Master said.

There was spontaneity in the wisdom with which Jesus spoke. Those who knew Him as the untutored Son of a carpenter, ask incredulously, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" When questions were brought to Him he never asked for time to consult with the elders or to read books. Always the answer was ready on His lips, and the answer was always correct. He scrupled not to set out what "they of old time" had said, and then over against their false conclusions Jesus gave the true conclusion, "But I say unto you." His words sprang from His heart and lips like waters from an artesian spring, and "after that no

man dost ask him any more questions."

Jesus made free use of the parable. Thirty parables are found in His report. His material was at once the simplest and most profound. By the same words He instructed children and confounded philosophers. He spoke on the origin, duty and destiny of men with an authority which admitted of no quibbling. He was indeed "a prophet like unto Moses," but He differed from Moses in being greater than he. He told us all we need to know about the way to God, and ever since then good men have spent their time, not in inventing ways to heaven, but in making men know Christ's way.

4. God hath spoken to us through the marvelous miracles of His Son. Some time ago I read a book called "The Faith that Rebels." It was in reality just a new setting for the miracles of Jesus. The author said that the great majority of men take things as they find them and reconcile themselves to them. But the faith of Jesus rebelled. It rebelled against a troubled nature, so He stilled the tempest and quieted the waves. It rebelled against poverty, so He sent to the sea for a fish whose mouth bore gold enough to pay double temple tax. It rebelled against sickness, so He healed the multitudes who waited upon His ministry. It rebelled against death, so He broke up every funeral He ever attended, and accounted death a vanquished foe. It rebelled against sin, so He cast out wicked spirits and forgave the transgressions of those who believed on Him.

The miracles of Jesus never taxed Him. Always there was a sense of fitness in whatever He did, and also the intimation that He could have done much more, if more had been required. If the boat went off without Him, He overtook it in the fourth watch by making the water a pavement for His feet. If the people came to the desert to hear Him preach, and stayed until late dinner time, He supplied their needs without opening a fish market or founding a bakery. If a man was let down by his friends on whom he depended for help in entering the healing waters, Jesus gave him health without his having to reach the water at all. He did not require that the ailment should be pronounced "curable," nor did He demand that the applicant should bring a recommendation. When they came -- the blind, the deaf, the lame, the halt, the palsied, the leprous -- "he healed them all." There was never a case too hard for Him. He was Master of the earth, the sea and the sky. Through His marvelous miracles God hath spoken unto us of His wisdom, love and power in language that we cannot fail to understand.

The men of His day came without apology to ask Jesus to do the impossible, and this gives us our lead, "Can a leopard change his spots or an Ethiopian the color of his skin?" These things are easier than that a sinner should become a saint, but "nothing is too hard for Jesus." His marvelous miracles have taught us that. He can make us new without and within, and can give us the power of endless life within our mortal frame. Jesus is the moral, as well as the physical, miracle worker.

5. God hath spoken unto us through the high priestly sufferings of His Son. Instinctively men have known that nothing less than a sinless sacrifice can make atonement for sin. This is why they have sought out the innocent dove and the spotless lamb, and this is why John pointed out Jesus in the crowd, and cried, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!"

Sin is such a deep, dark, inexcusable thing that nothing short of the deepest, fullest atonement can make a way for its pardon and cleansing. But Jesus, the only begotten Son, was the most that God could give, and Jesus went all the way to Calvary to die ignominiously upon the cross.

It is strange that anyone could ever hate One so miraculously born, so spotless in life, so peerless as a teacher and so marvelous in the miracles which He wrought! Surely that hate which hounded Him from the

days of Herod the king who sought to snuff out the life of the newborn Christ child, to the time when He hung His limp head in death upon the cross, must have been inspired by the devil. It was right in the midst of His life of kindly service that the shadow of the cross fell across His pathway. He had turned His face as though He would go to Jerusalem. His disciples warned and pleaded. But Jesus knew His hour had come. He entered Jerusalem amidst the triumphant acclaim of the multitudes. For the second time He used His authority to enter the temple and cast out the traders who desecrated it. He taught and answered questions, as in days gone by. He preached to His disciples on His own second coming. He rested in the home of His friends at Bethany. He ate the Passover feast with His disciples in the upper room in the city. He passed out to the Garden of Gethsemane to weep and sweat and pray. The agony of death came upon Him, and He saw that only by means of His life's blood could He make a way of escape from hell for the millions of earth who were on their march to endless death. He was arrested like a common thief. He was tried illegally, and convicted on the basis of perjured evidence. His back was scourged in an effort to make Him confess to some felony. In mockery, He was robed in purple and crowned with thorns. He bore His own cross until His strength failed. At "the place of skulls" He was nailed to a cross of wood, and lifted up between earth and heaven, as though rejected by both. They gave Him vinegar mingled with gall to drink. They derided and mocked Him during His suffering. They spat upon Him. They cast lots for His vesture. They left Him to die alone. He yielded up the ghost, and cried, "It is finished." All this appeared to the senses of men.

But there was another side to the scene on Golgotha. It was the divine side. In surrendering to us His only begotten Son, God spoke to us of His pity and His love, and the cross, from being an instrument of shame, became the sign of salvation. God indeed provided a Lamb and gave Him to die upon the tree, and through the merits of that death a way to salvation and life has been opened for us. Jesus died that we might live. He came down to earth that we might go up to heaven. He walked the dusty, stony road of our world that we might walk the golden streets of His world. He drank the vinegar mingled with gall that we might drink the water of life. He wore a crown of thorns that we might wear a crown of glory. He was lifted up upon a cross that we might be lifted up upon a throne. He suffered that we might reign. He went to the grave that we might come up out of the grave. His sufferings were high priestly, and through them we have access to God by faith.

6. God hath spoken to us by the triumphant resurrection of His Son from the dead. The cross without the resurrection might speak to us of pity. But the empty tomb speaks of victory and of power.

No fact of human history is more fully verified than the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This is the miracle of miracles. It is the trumpet call to faith in God. It is the unanswerable argument of God to the validity of His revelation. Jesus arose from the grave on the morning of the third day and became the firstfruit of them that sleep. His resurrection guarantees our pardon and cleansing from sin, and our victory over death in the end. "Because he lives, we shall live also."

The would-be founder of a cult in France came to Richelieu for advice. Said the cultist, "I have worked out the thesis for a new religion, and I believe it is a good one. It would soon spread and become popular, if I could get a few disciples to begin with. How can I get a few faithful men who will follow me in the days of beginnings until my religion gets a start?" To this Richelieu made reply, "I'll tell you what to do: go out and get yourself crucified in some public place. Go to the grave and remain three days. Then on the morning of the third day come out alive and transformed, and show yourself to a selected company, and you will have followers who will stand by you through difficult times and good." No one but Jesus can ever meet that challenge.

The great of earth usually have markers at their graves, but when one inquired as to why the grave of Jesus is not marked, the reply was, "Why, He is not dead, and they do not mark empty graves." Let us go today with those disciples who came on that Easter morning and beheld the place where they laid Him. Let us look again at those discarded grave clothes. Let us think again of that glorified body which could pass through the bolted door and transport itself from Jerusalem to the mountains of Galilee without the use of visible means. Let us gaze upon those gaping wounds in hands, feet and side, and let us cry out with Thomas, "My Lord, and my God."

7. God hath spoken to us by His Son in the outpouring of His post-mortem Successor -- the Holy Spirit. The men of this world hasten to complete their work before death overtakes them, but Jesus rejoiced in fuller activity in the carrying out of His mission in the days following His decease, when the Holy Spirit should be His Executor.

On the verge of His going away He said, "I will pray the Father and he shall give you another comforter." That promise was fulfilled fifty days after His crucifixion when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the one hundred and twenty disciples who waited in prayer in the upper room at Jerusalem.

This coming of the Holy Spirit was not only dispensational for the Church, but it is the pattern experience for the people of God in every age and generation, and this voice of God by His Son speaks today every time an individual Christian feels his own heart warmed by the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit came through the intercession of Jesus Christ, on the basis of His atoning work, so God speaks to us today in the person of Christ's post-mortem Successor.

No intelligent person will discount the testimony of Christian consciousness. The Spirit does bear witness with our spirits when we are the children of God. There is an effective response to the prayer and faith of the penitent seeker after God, and when that witness comes, let it be remembered that this is God speaking to us by His Son.

No further word from God is due. He hath spoken unto us by His Son. Any further word would be declension, not progress. The most exalted Messenger has brought the fullest message. What more is left? The rich man in hell was told that if his brethren would not listen to Moses and the prophets, they would not hear though one went to them from the dead. How much more then are we without excuse to whom God hath spoken by His Son?

There is only one fitting conclusion. It is the same as the author of Hebrews makes to his observations on this final word from God: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the words spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"

Let us hear and heed His message today.

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