

the TREASURY

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God Speaks – Are You Listening?



by Ian Hayward

Does God still speak to us today?

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. Hebrews 1:13

There is no doubt about it, God has spoken but the question remains for many; does he still speak to us today? Genesis 1:1 reminds us that God has existed from before time and created all things. John 1 reminds us that the Word was God and that He became flesh and became flesh and made his dwelling among us. The ultimate revelation of God to us. Hebrews 1 tells us more about our God in that He is a God who has revealed Himself to us and continues to do so.

God has made Himself known to us through creation

Romans 1 tells us that '... what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made ...'

Psalm 19:1 reminds us 'The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.'

Hebrews 1:1 brings us to the point that God wants to do more than just reveal himself to us he wants to communicate with us, he wants to enjoy fellowship with us.

How did God speak to 'our ancestors'?

Can you think of the ways God spoke in the Old Testament?

In Genesis he walked and talked with Adam and Eve in the garden, but that close relationship was broken by man's disobedience and he was sent out of the garden. But God still communicated to man. He spoke to Cain, asking about his brother. He told Noah to build an ark and He told Abram to leave his country.

God spoke through visions and dreams not only to his own people but to others, for example Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar.

God spoke to Moses through a burning bush and In Number 12 we are told that:

'I, the Lord, reveal myself to them (a prophet) in visions, I speak to them in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; ... with him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles'

God spoke in unusual ways, a talking donkey or a hand writing on the wall.

He spoke to the nations of Israel and Judah through the prophets.

How does God speak now?

By His Son. Simple. If you want to hear God speak listen to His Son. He came to earth and lived among us. John writes in his first letter 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.' The teachings of Jesus have been handed down to us by the apostles in the New Testament.

When the writer to the Hebrews quotes from the Old Testament he often introduces it with 'He says'; God still speaks through what was written many years before, and it still speaks to us and can be applied to us, just as it was to his readers then. Paul tells us in Romans 15 'For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.'

Though we do not audibly hear the voice of God today, we can still hear His voice in His Word that has been recorded for us. As someone has once said; 'If you want to God speak read the Bible, if you want to hear him speak audibly read it aloud.' Incidentally it is a good practice to read it out aloud, even to yourself as it slows you down to take in each word and not skip over something important.

Writing to Timothy, Paul reminds him, and us, that '... and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for

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The Presbyterian Church of Wales by Numbers

22% of churches have ten members or fewer

4% of the membership are in churches with over 100 members

34% of members are part of churches that number between 21 - 50 members

33% of churches are served by a PCW minister

44% of members are in pastor-less churches

There were **18,567** active members in June 2019

The population of Wales in 2019 was **3,205,362**

Sheep outnumber people **4:1**

'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'

Luke 10: 2



The reading of all good books is like conversation with the finest (people) of the past centuries.
— Descartes



'Girl with a book' (1850) : Jose Ferraz de Almeida Junior, (Museo de Arte de São Paulo)

My friend Jan and the reading project

by Maureen Roberts

Six or seven months ago my friend Jan said to me, I'm a scientist, and I have not read very much literature. You are much more educated in these things and so I'd like you to suggest to me the really classic works of literature that I should read. I was of course very flattered by this remark and realised that in my teenage years in secondary school in

Denbigh, I and another friend, had been huge readers of great works of literature. We used to, almost compete, to be the most intellectually *avant-garde* girls in the school. I am sure we were an extreme pain in the neck to everybody else. We also belonged to the Debating and Literary Society in school which entailed reading a wide range of books.

So, I started with, I think what would be accepted, as the

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salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Does God tell us everything?

Deuteronomy 29:29 'The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.'

'All the Scriptures are the word of God. From him they came; they were spoken by holy men of God; they contain a full, sufficient, and perfect revelation of the mind and will of God, concerning all things that are necessary to be known for our salvation; and they are the only infallible rule of faith and obedience.' (from

our own Confession of Faith.)

God has told us enough in the Bible about Himself and His Son and the way of salvation for us to turn to Him in repentance and faith. We may have many unanswered questions but they are not enough to stop us coming to Christ.

When we become members of the Presbyterian Church of Wales we make four promises, one of which is 'Do you promise to be faithful to Christ, and to seek His will for you through reading the Bible and through prayer?'

Are you keeping your promise and listening to what God has to say through His Son and His Word to you today?

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classics of British literature 'Middlemarch' by George Eliot, 'David Copperfield' by Dickens and 'Sense and Sensibility', by Jane Austen.

I then decided the perhaps we should have a more international flavour to our book selection, so my friend Jan, then read the 'Grapes of Wrath' by John Steinbeck and 'Anna Karenina' by Tolstoy. So far, we were reading books that I had particularly enjoyed but I felt that we also need to look at European literature so my friend bravely ploughed through Flaubert's 'Madame Bovary', Andre Gide's 'The Counterfeiter' and Thomas Mann's 'Buddenbrooks'.

You can see that she is a dedicated reader. After all that, you will not be surprised to hear that my friend said 'could we have something that was perhaps a bit amusing'. Now I am open to suggestions in the letters column, but this was not so easy. However, my friend has now read Evelyn Waugh's 'Decline and Fall' which she found hilarious and really laughed out loud at. Then she read Spike Milligan's 'Puckoon'.

We have now gone back to British books and she is reading Arnold Bennett's 'The Card' and some of his other books that are set in the potteries. I have suggested Trollope to her and of course Thomas Hardy. Next in line will be Ernest Hemingway's 'Farewell to Arms' and Virginia Woolf, 'To the Lighthouse'.

Now you may say, that there is nothing very religious about this article. However, what is interesting is that nearly all the great works of literature, even including the humorous books, involve issues about good and bad, love, family life, choice - about decisions about your life. The great novels address in many respects that central question that so many people ask 'what is the meaning of life' and what our purpose is here, and that is something that we have discussed together.

Also, my friend, who has a medical background, has supported me in the past six months when I have been very poorly with some odd virus. She has talked through and explained blood results, she has reassured me, explained some of the jargon that doctors and nurses have used, and texted me and phoned me on many occasions to check how I am. So, a wonderful, and perhaps

unforeseen benefit, of this arrangement has been a deepening of our friendship. We have got to know each other so much better. We are now part of a small (elite!) group that go to the cinema together particularly to watch films based on literary classics such as *Little Women*, *Emma*, and *David Copperfield*. We also go to the cinema together to watch some of the live cinema productions of plays, ballet and opera put on by the international opera and ballet companies.

This has been a wonderful journey for me and Jan but also for our other friends who now come the cinema with us. We have learnt so much together, and shared so much, and it has been a great blessing for all of us.

When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.
— 2 Timothy 4: 13

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The new 50 pence coin has been the subject of talk lately. Issued on 31st January to mark Britain's departure from the European Union, it has been selling on eBay for many times more than its face value, in one instance for £113.

Some prominent personalities like Lord Adonis and Alistair Campbell are refusing to use it, while others have been debating whether the text should have included the Oxford comma. The 50p coin has been in circulation for fifty years by now, and whilst **'the Treasury'** cannot claim to have held its cover price for half a century, the current cost of a copy continues at 50p for the foreseeable future which is a good reason to continue subscribing, and to even enrol some new subscribers from your church.