

TUTORIAL
4.2

God has spoken (part 2)

This tutorial continues to introduce the whole area of communication by focusing on God's communication with Man. God's reasons for communicating and the content of His communication are also discussed here, as well as what His communication reveals about His character.

So what is God saying?

Anyone who is willing to look can see God's creation around them. And they can see God's character - power and majesty - reflected there.

Romans 1:20 *For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.*

But 1 Chronicles 16:24 and Psalm 66 tell us that God wants people to know the things He has done.

Psalm 66:1-5

1 *Shout joyful praises to God, all the earth!*

2 *Sing about the glory of his name!*

Tell the world how glorious he is.

3 *Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!*

Your enemies cringe before your mighty power.

4 *Everything on earth will worship you;*

they will sing your praises,

shouting your name in glorious songs." Interlude

5 *Come and see what our God has done,*

what awesome miracles he performs for people!

God has told us what He is doing

God is at work and always has been. He is not the distant God of Islam nor is He the impersonal force of Buddhism. He acts in the affairs of humans. Since the dawn of history, God has been at work in the world - it is the stage on which God has chosen to act.

John 5:17 *But Jesus replied, "My Father is always working, and so am I."*

The Lord Jesus had this overwhelming sense of God at work and of Himself working within God's plan. The rest of the universe is filled with angelic and human spectators, watching what God is doing.

History is about God's Work, and Scripture is God's account of that Work. It is God telling His Story. He calls all men to know about His works and His work.

God has the leading role in His Story

Psalm 66:5 *Come and see what our God has done, what awesome miracles he performs for people!*

We should see with eyes which observe His work, from the beginning. To understand what He has done "from the beginning" and to know what He is doing now, and what He plans to do until time and history are completed.

The Bible is God's account of His work - past, present and future. Too often the Church has mistakenly seen the Bible as "the stories of people and their encounters with God" - rather than God's story of His work and His planned encounters with man.

God has the Leading Role in the whole drama of redemption - and the Bible is God's record of His work throughout the history of the world.

1 Chronicles 16:24-29

24 *Publish his glorious deeds among the nations.*

Tell everyone about the amazing things he does.

25 *Great is the LORD! He is most worthy of praise!*

He is to be feared above all gods.

26 *The gods of other nations are mere idols,
but the LORD made the heavens!*

27 *Honour and majesty surround him;
strength and joy fill his dwelling.*

28 *O nations of the world, recognise the LORD,
recognise that the LORD is glorious and strong.*

29 *Give to the LORD the glory he deserves!*

*Bring your offering and come into his presence.
Worship the LORD in all his holy splendour.*

The theme of God's Story is His Glory

So God has told His story, the story of His deeds, His work - what He has done, is doing and will do - and the central theme is His Glory. The Bible is God's revelation of His Glory.

Beginning with His creation of the world and continuing step by step through history, God has demonstrated the wonders of His own glorious person. This is the focus of His communication. He could not withhold this from us because to do so would be less than loving, less than gracious, less than righteous.

What God has done and said

Most Christians generally consider the Scriptures to be the record of the words of God - what He has said. We often fail to see God's Word also as His account to the world of His deeds, His actions - what He has done. God has revealed himself as He walked through history with men.

How God has shared His Story

As we said - God, the Communicator, the Teacher, created man to understand. God fully comprehends the human mind. He knows the best way to communicate with that mind, and God has chosen the best form to communicate His Story.

Who He is - revealed through His actions

He revealed Himself to Israel:

The things God recorded in the Scriptures actually happened in time and space. He spoke, He acted, and interacted with real people - people just like us.

He reminded Israel of His true identity and pointed them back to His historical relationships.

***Exodus 3:15** God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: Yahweh, the God of your ancestors - the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob - has sent me to you.
This is my eternal name, my name to remember for all generations.*

God said to the Children of Israel - if you want to know who I am, remember how I acted in relationships with your fathers.
Remember Egypt, the Passover, the wilderness.

Did my promises fail? I allowed judgment to fall on you, because of your idolatry and disobedience, but I was faithful to deliver you.

Deuteronomy 7:18,19 ...Just remember what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all the land of Egypt. **19** Remember the great terrors the LORD your God sent against them. You saw it all with your own eyes! And remember the miraculous signs and wonders, and the strong hand and powerful arm with which he brought you out of Egypt. The LORD your God will use this same power against all the people you fear.

God revealed Himself in history. Their leaders and prophets constantly reminded Israel of that history. Their faith rested on God as He revealed Himself through His historical acts. God's story of who He is, revealed through His actions, was the basis for the faith of each successive generation. Individuals had to exercise personal faith - but not faith in a subjective experience. They had to exercise faith in God, the redeemer of their nation, as He had acted clearly in history.

He revealed Himself in Christ:

God's ultimate revelation was through Christ.

God stepped into the pages of history and acted in the form of a human - God in action - God walking the roads of Palestine, showing His power over the elements, over Satan, sin and death - and interacting with people.

When Philip said "Lord, show us the Father",
(John 14:9) Jesus replied, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don't know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking me to show him to you?"

This too is God telling His Story.

The Apostles' Story:

The Apostles saw the Old Testament as God's record of what He had been doing in the world - especially with His chosen people. The Old Testament was the Bible of the early church.

The Apostles' teaching as recorded in Acts emphasised God's historical actions as He related to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses and David. They then showed the links between those acts of God in the Old Testament with His revelation of Himself in the Story of His Son - Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

The Apostles interpreted the whole of Christ's coming, His birth, death, resurrection, present glory and all future revelations of His majesty on the basis of the accounts and prophecies of the Old Testament. They used the Old

Testament to authenticate the claim of Jesus of Nazareth to be the Christ, the Anointed One.

For them, His Story began long before they met Him beside the Sea of Galilee or the River Jordan - what they saw of His life fitted with what they already knew of God as revealed through His actions. They taught the Old Testament and its history along with the events they had just experienced with Jesus of Nazareth as One Story.

Our responsibility to tell the whole Story

We have thought about the fact that God communicates, and that He created man so that he could communicate with Him - to reveal His glory. Sin has created obstacles to that but God has continued to speak. He has given us the Story of His actions in space and time - how He has acted (worked) - to deal with sin and death and Satan.

That is the Story that has been entrusted to the Church. To us. He wants us to tell the whole Story. To recount His true account of History. He wants us to communicate fully and clearly as He Himself has.



DISCUSSION POINTS

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1. The tutorial states that *“most Christians generally consider the Scriptures to be the record of the words of God - what He has said. We often fail to see God’s Word also as His account to the world of His deeds, His actions - what He has done.”* Would you agree with this statement? Does it reflect the general view or teaching of the Christian community you are most familiar with? Explain why you think their view has formed in the way it has.
2. It has been said by some people that God has not clearly revealed Himself and is ‘hidden’, so that therefore His judgment of people is not fair. What would you say to someone who presented that view to you?



ACTIVITIES

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1. Find two quotes from the Apostles that show clearly their level of personal commitment to telling God's story.