

God Has Spoken
Tract Series

“SPOKEN IN THESE
LAST DAYS”

“God, who at various times and various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by his Son...”

So begins the book of Hebrews, an epistle written to people who had lived under God’s Old Testament all their lives until they heard and obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ. The book is written to assure them that their new faith was, indeed, authorized and desired by God (Hebrews 2:1-4). The introduction we have just noticed shows the continuity of God’s communication: what they recently had been taught was indeed spoken by the same God who uttered the law by which they and their ancestors had lived. They were now required to live no longer under that old law, but only under this new law.

We can be sure that the New Testament is the word of the God who “in the beginning created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). The evidence supporting this faith is abundant and convincing.

What, though, about a law for *today*? Are the teachings of Jesus and the apostles of nearly 2,000 years ago in force today? Is the plan of salvation which they taught still the one God requires men to obey today? Is the plan of worship which they taught and practiced still the only approved form of worship? Is the moral code enjoined then and there still God’s law for here and now? Many say that what is written in the New Testament concerning practical matters of daily life was applicable only for the time and place in which it was originally taught. What authoritative answer is there to this question?

*God has spoken
by the mouth of all His holy prophets
since the world began
(Acts 3:21)*

JESUS SPOKE WITH AUTHORITY

What Jesus says has the same authority as if God Himself had said it. In John 12:44 Jesus declared that belief in Him was not only belief in Jesus as the Christ, but was belief in God the Father Himself. Why is that so?

In verse 45 He said that all who see Jesus are seeing God. He added in chapter 14, verse 7, that those who know Jesus know also God the Father, and have seen Him. When Philip asked to see God, Jesus answered (verse 9), “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”

People who watched Jesus work and walk through this world, or heard him preach, and then compared that life with the Old Testament (Acts 17:11), could know that Jesus was the fleshly image of God (II Corinthians 4:4). Those who were not convinced by his *words* would surely be convinced by his *works* (John 14:10-11) if they would study the matter.

Jesus said of the words which he spoke that they were not words of his choosing, but rather words of God’s choosing: “I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say, and what I should speak” (John 12:49).

When the chief executive of a country sends an emissary with a message to the people or government of another country, when that emissary delivers that message, whether in written or in spoken form, that message has the same force as if it had been delivered by that chief executive in person. So it is with the words of God when Christ, the Prince of God (Acts 5:31), speaks. Jesus declared, “therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak” (John 12:50).

God himself has spoken from Heaven on this matter. It is recorded in Matthew 17:1-5, Mark 9:2-8 and Luke 9:28-36 that Jesus took Peter, James and John up into a high mountain. While they were there Moses and Elijah miraculously appeared to them from the dead. Peter was so delighted to have such great personages assembled at one place and time that he cried out, “Lord, it is good for us to be here” (Matthew 17:4). He wanted to build three tabernacles so they could all stay and enjoy the fellowship. While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them all, and a voice was heard coming out of Heaven, saying of Jesus, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him” (verse 5).

God's own word came audibly out of Heaven – without a human intermediary – establishing the authority of anything Jesus might say. It is no surprise to us then, that the Hebrew writer bases his epistle on the statement that “God...hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son...” When Jesus speaks, it is actually God speaking by him.

THE APOSTLES SPOKE WITH AUTHORITY

Not only are the words of Jesus authoritative, but those of the apostles and other inspired writers of the New Testament are also.

In John 14:26 Jesus told the apostles (the twelve hand-picked men whom He would send to evangelize the world after His death – Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16) that they would have a Holy Spirit-aided memory of all the His teachings. He told the same men (less Judas Iscariot – Acts 1:15-20) in Mark 16:15-16 to go throughout the world preaching the gospel to “every creature.” One of those men, Peter, later wrote that all the things that these men taught were exactly as Jesus had taught them and as God had wanted them preached and written (Acts 2:32,33; 4:20; II Peter 1:2-3; 20-21). He said also that the apostle Paul wrote “scripture” (II Peter 3:15-16), a word that, in the context in which it appears, means God-guided writing. That same Paul himself made it much more clear and emphatic when he wrote, in I Corinthians 2:13, “we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches.”

It is clear then, that both Jesus and the apostles spoke, and the apostles wrote, with the authority of God Himself, and that what they taught had the force of law.

“THESE LAST DAYS”

The words of Jesus, and thus also of the apostles, are authoritative, all right, but *for what period of time?* In the verses quoted at the beginning of this tract (Hebrews 1:1-2a), the Holy Spirit says that God has spoken by His Son “in these last days.” What was taught in the New Testament, then, has authority in the “last days.” If we can determine what God means by that term, then we will know the period of time during which the New Testament doctrine is authoritative.

What is the time and place of this authority? It is evident that not everything that has ever been law anyplace is necessarily in force at all times and in all places. One need not study to know the truth of this. City ordinances in Paris, France have no weight at all in Chicago, Illinois.

The Old Testament has no force of law over any people in any place today. It has been fulfilled (Matthew 5:17-18) and taken out of the way (Colossians 2:14). It has served its purpose and no man is under it today (Galatians 3:24-25). Obviously, it was given only for a particular span of time that ended when Jesus died on the cross (Ephesians 2:14-16).

What about the New Testament, then? For what people and time was it given?

NEW TESTAMENT: FOR WHAT PEOPLE?

Whereas the Old Testament had been given to the Jews only (Exodus 19), the New Testament was given to the whole world. Even the Old Testament prophets foretold this. Jeremiah spoke of a coming covenant (testament – Hebrews 9:1, 15) that would be different (Jeremiah 31:31-32) from the old. Isaiah before him had spoken of a new name (Isaiah 56:5) that would be given under a new covenant that would include Gentiles as well as Jews (62:1-2).

Remember that, when Jesus sent the apostles out to preach the gospel, He sent them to “all nations” (Matthew 28:19) in “all the world” to preach to “every creature” (Mark 16:15). Peter had to be shown a vision from the Lord before he learned the full meaning of this new blessing (Acts 10:9-21, 34), but it is repeatedly confirmed in both the Old and New Testaments (Daniel 7:27; Romans 1:16).

Every soul on earth who has the mental capacity to understand the difference between right and wrong (Matthew 11:15; 13:9, 43) has sinned (Romans 3:23). Sin is only possible when there is a law governing man, and man violates that law (Romans 7:7-8). Thus, the New Testament has the force of law over every soul on earth.

NEW TESTAMENT: FOR WHAT TIME?

But does that force of law continue until today in all its particulars? Is the plan of salvation still the same as it was when the New Testament was written? Is the pattern of worship still the same? Is the code of conduct and morality still the same for today in America as it was 2,000 years ago in Corinth and Ephesus?

Again, remember that the epistle to the Hebrews says that the word spoken through Jesus (and subsequently his apostles) was authoritative in

the “last days.” That term is used several times in the Bible; both Old and New Testaments to refer to a particular period of time with clearly definable beginning and ending limits.

Isaiah wrote (Isaiah 2:2), “Now it shall come to pass *in the latter days*, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.” Micah wrote (Micah 4:1) the same prophecy in the same words. When the Lord’s house is established it will be “the latter days.”

But that house was already established and Timothy was in it when Paul wrote I Timothy 3:15 (“...conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God...”). “The Lord’s house” prophesied by Isaiah and Micah is the church which was established on Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2 (approximately A.D. 33).

In that second chapter of Acts when Peter preached the gospel, he began by saying “this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass *in the last days*, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh: Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams” (Acts 2:16, 17). When Peter said “this is that,” he was saying “the last days are here.” Jesus had already lived and died and returned to Heaven, and now the apostles began to preach in his name (Acts 4:7-10).

“Little children, *it is the last hour*: and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come; by which we know that *it is the last hour*” (I John 2:18). When John wrote “*it is*” almost 2,000 years ago, he knew that he was already living in the “last hour.”

The text we have noticed (Hebrews 1:2), says that God “has *in these last days* spoken to us by His Son.” He said “*THESE*” last days. The writer was living in them. But here we are 2,000 years later and still living; can anything come after the last?

Inspiration says (Hebrews 9:26) of Jesus, “but now once *at the end of the ages* He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” God, choosing the very verb tense he wanted written (John 8:58), has used here the past perfect tense: the appearing of Jesus was already done in the past when Hebrews was written sometime around A.D. 60. But it was already the end of the ages when he appeared. What then is it *NOW*? Has

the world already ceased and are we living someplace else? Obviously not! “*The latter days,*” “*these last days,*” “*the last hour*” and “*the end of the ages*” are all the same period of time. According to Hebrews 1:1-2 there was time when God spoke to the fathers (ancestors) by the prophets. That was an earlier time. But now, when God speaks by His Son rather than prophets, it is “*the last time.*” **This last time is all the time earth has left. There will be no other way in which God will speak** to man while the earth stands. What He said in the days of Jesus and the apostles is His law until He speaks again (I Thessalonians 4:16), at which time it will be too late to obey (Matthew 25:1-13).

CONCLUSION

Every word of Jesus and every word of the apostles walking in His footsteps (I Corinthians 11:1; I Peter 2:21) had the authority of God and the force of unchangeable law when it was given. It still has the same authority and force today. Every such word will continue to carry that same authority and force until the earth shall end with the coming of Jesus in the clouds to carry every man before the judgement throne where we shall give an account of how our lives have compared with that word.

You cannot change or remove that word. You must face it. Are you ready?

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