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THE ORACLES OF GOD

Paul Galligan

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles [rudimentary beginnings] of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food" Hebrews 5:12. In the verses prior to this, the writer has been explaining some deep things concerning Christ the Son being *"a Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek"* (Heb.5:5-10). Then the writer says concerning Melchizedek, *"of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing"* (v.11). The problem with these Hebrew believers, is explained in four ways:

- they are dull of hearing
- they should have grown up to be teachers by now
- they need to be taught again the first principles of the oracles of God
- they need milk and not solid food.

As a result of still being babes in terms of understanding the word of God, they are *"unskilled in the word of righteousness"* (Heb.5:13). In the context, the word of righteousness is referring to the oracles of God. It is the mature word that comes, enabling the minister to rightly divide the word of truth (2Tim.2:15). It comes as a result of diligent study, giving oneself to the word. But God wants every believer to grow up into this maturity, for He says, *"But solid food is for those who are of full age [mature], those who by reason of use [practice] have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil [bad]"* Heb.5:14.

What are the oracles of God?

The oracles of God are **the Scripture**, that which is written. Jesus said *"It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'"* (Matt.4:4). Jesus said three times *"It is written"* and each time He quoted from the Scripture. So the oracles of God are the Scriptures, but in the verse that Jesus quotes, the Scripture gives us further insight into the oracles of God: **they proceed from the mouth of God**. The Greek word used in this quote is *rhema*, normally translated 'word', but refers more to the spoken word, an utterance and is defined in the quote: *"that proceeds from the mouth of God"*.

Summarising what we learn from **Matthew 4:4** about the oracles of God; they are:

- i. the Scripture
- ii. that which is written
- iii. the word that proceeds from the mouth of God

The oracles of God are all of Scripture

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" 2Tim.3:16. Notice it says **all Scripture!** The Bible is the word of God and it is the word of God in its sum total and in all of its parts - every part of the Bible is the word of God.

The Scripture is given by inspiration of God: this means the Scripture is God breathed. The Greek word is *Theopneustos*, meaning literally **God breathed**. Peter, in describing how the Old Testament Scriptures were written, says, "*but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*" (2Pet.1:21). This means literally that they were 'being borne along' or 'coursed along' by the Holy Spirit, as in a river - the river of God!

The Scripture is profitable for: doctrine [teaching], reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness. Remember the Hebrew believers were "*unskilled in the word of righteousness*" (Heb.5:13). We need to be taught and trained in the word, in the Scripture, so that we can receive the oracles of God. The Lord promises a "*crown of righteousness*" (2Tim.4:8). To receive this crown we need to be keeping [abiding in] the word of righteousness and standing in the word of righteousness.

The oracles of God are the word of God

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart" Heb.4:12.

There is nothing to compare with the word of God:

- **it is alive**; it is the word of life; "*The words that I speak to you are spirit, and are life*"(Jn.6:63).
- **it is powerful!** The Greek word is *energes*, and elsewhere is translated as 'effective'. This word is used in two other verses in the New Testament, "*For a great and effective door has opened for me and there are many adversaries*" 1Cor.16:9. It is the word of God that opens great and effective doors for ministry, because the word of God is powerful. "*That the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgement of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus*" Philemon v.6. Our testimony is powerful when we testify according to the word of God. *Energes* can mean energetic and is the opposite of idle, inactive and ineffective.

The words of Jesus are forever

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" Matt.24:35.

The word of the Lord grows mightily and prevails, Acts 19:20.

We are learning about the word. The main Greek word translated as 'word' is *logos* SC#3056, which has many meanings, but mostly translated as 'word'. It means: a transmission of thought, communication, a word of explanation, an utterance, divine revelation, an oracle, divine promise, divine doctrine.

True doctrine is a very important aspect of the oracles of God that must be understood. It is the doctrine of God: "*Jesus answered them and said, 'My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wills to do His will, He shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or I speak on My own'*" Jn.7:16-17. True doctrine comes from heaven; it originates from heaven; "*Your word is settled in heaven*" (Ps.119:89).

We are to take heed to the doctrine. "*Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you*"

1Tim.4:16. For there is no other doctrine. Paul says, *"that they teach no other doctrine"* (1Tim.1:3).

The oracles of God in the Old Testament

The word 'oracle' only appears once in the Old Testament in the King James Bible, in **2Samuel 16:23.** *"Now the advice of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, was as if one had inquired at the oracle of God. So was all the advice of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom."* The word that this man spoke was received as a reliable and authoritative word that was to be trusted and obeyed.

The Hebrew word 'debir'

The Hebrew word is *debir*; SC#1687. This word has the sense of oracle, but actually refers to the shrine or the innermost part of the sanctuary. The word appears 17 times, once translated as 'oracle' and 16 times as 'inner sanctuary'. There is a mystery here, and this mystery is also reflected in the New Testament in **Revelation 15:5:** *"After these things I looked, and behold, the temple [sanctuary, the inner shrine] of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened."* This verse is ill-translated by the word 'temple', because the Greek word is referring to the same thing as the ancient Hebrew word, *debir*, was referring to, that is, the inner sanctuary of the house of God. So the oracle of God is linked to the inner sanctuary of the house of God and is referring to the Holy of Holies in both the Temple and the Tabernacle, where the Ark of the Covenant was placed.

The speaking place of God

The oracle of God is that word which originates in the inner sanctuary of God's house. This is confirmed when God was instructing Moses in the building of the Tabernacle and its furnishings. *"You shall put the Mercy Seat on top of the Ark, and in the Ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you. And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the Mercy Seat, from between the two Cherubim which are on the Ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give in commandment to the children of Israel"* Ex.25:21-22.

This is confirmed in **Numbers 7:89** *"Now when Moses went into the Tabernacle of Meeting to speak with Him, he heard the voice of One speaking to him from above the Mercy Seat that was on the Ark of the Testimony, from between the two Cherubim, thus He spoke to him."*

Originally God intended to meet with His people face to face, but the people became afraid and they refused to meet with God. They requested Moses to meet with God and then to speak to them (**Ex.20:18-19**). In the new covenant God wishes to meet with everyone of His people and be able to speak to them face to face, even as He spoke to Moses. He intends for the people of God to be able to teach others the very word that God speaks to them.

A defiled prophet cannot speak the oracle of God

There are other uses of the word 'oracle' in the NKJ Bible, but it is a different Hebrew word and does not really mean oracle. For example, in **Numbers 23 and 24** it says that Balaam *"took up his oracle"* (**Nu.23:7,18 & 24:3,15**). The word in the Hebrew is translated 'proverb' and 'parable' in the KJV. The fact that Balaam was a defiled prophet who used sorcery, means

that he could not speak the oracle of God, that is, the pure unadulterated word from the mouth of God. However he could not do other than speak the word God gave him to speak, but that is different to the oracle of God. God caused a donkey to speak as well and that is not the oracle of God.

The oracles of God in the New Testament

The word translated as 'oracle' is *logion* SC#3051. It means 'an utterance [of God]' and is translated four times as oracle. Vines says that *logion* means a word, narrative, statement; a divine response or utterance an oracle.

1. The contents of the Mosaic law are the oracles of God

In **Acts 7:38**, Stephen is speaking of Moses receiving the law word, "*This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give us.*"

2. The Old Testament Scriptures are the oracles of God

"What advantage has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God" Rom.3:1-2.

3. The Christian doctrine of the New Testament equals the oracles of God

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God and you have come to need milk and not solid food" Heb.5:12. We learn from this verse that all Christians are expected to grow to maturity and to be able to teach the oracles of God. To be enabled to do this, one must be properly founded in the first principles of the oracles of God. These first principles are listed for us in **Hebrew 6:1-2**: repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgement. These are the first principles of the oracles of God. They are the first principles of the faith which is in Jesus Christ. God will not allow His people to handle the oracles of God if they are not properly founded and trained in the elementary doctrines of Christ. There will be no permit to go on to perfection [full maturity] (**Heb.6:3**).

4. The oracles of God are spoken through the utterances of the ones ordained to bring forth the word

"As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and dominion [sovereignty] forever and ever. Amen" **1Pet.4:10-11**.

The need for grace and the enablement that grace gives is the context in which Peter says that we can speak as the oracles of God, that is, to bring an utterance from the mouth of God. In the context of Peter's teaching, he says any member of the body of Christ can be enabled by grace to speak as the oracles of God.

Conclusion

To be able to receive the oracles of God, which are the Scriptures, the doctrine, the pure unadulterated word of God, we need to be properly founded on the first principles of the oracles of God. Foundations must come first; then we will be able to receive the oracle, the word of righteousness. Let us continue to lay the foundations, where they have not been laid; and let us continue to shore up the foundations where they need to be strengthened.

The oracles of God are given to us so that we can be taught, reproved, corrected and instructed in righteousness (**2Tim.3:16**). Then we are able by His grace to speak of the glory of God in Jesus the Messiah, who has all sovereignty forever and ever. AMEN.