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# Why Is God Silent?

*by: Ronald L. Dart*

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Why is God silent to us? Oh, I know there are 'would be prophets' who claim they speak for God or they had a vision from God or a dream, but I've kind of learned that those people are mostly frauds and I certainly know if they don't speak in agreement with the Bible, God has not sent them.

I have even had some of them try to tell me things about myself, but they always miss and therefore, I know they're not talking for God. Now I don't think that God is coy, I don't think He is shy, but I think He doesn't care to repeat Himself. With that said, there are times that I wish we could get a more direct answer, or at least we think we would like to have that.

## **Don't Be Silent**

David seems to have felt that way more than once. In the 28th Psalm David cries out and says, "O unto You will I cry, O LORD my rock; be not silent to me: lest, if You be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit. {2} Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry to you, when I lift up my hands toward your holy oracle. {3} Don't draw me away with the workers of iniquity, who speak peace to their neighbors, but mischief is in their hearts."

I can understand David's cry and I thought about the workers of iniquity, who speak peace to their neighbors, but mischief is in their heart. You know, Christian folk tend to be naive and trusting and we trust people without giving a lot of thought to whether we ought to trust them or not. Now the Israelis, perhaps identifying more with David realize, that people who speak peace, often as not, don't mean what they say. So what should you do? Well that's simple, pay more attention to what they do than what they say.

David went on in his prayer, {4} "Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavors: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert." In other words, what they deserve. Why? {5} "Because they regard not the works of the LORD, nor the operation of His hands, He shall destroy them, and not build them up."

Always hopeful, David ended his psalm on an upbeat note, {6} "Bless the LORD, because He has heard the voice of my supplications. {7} The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoices; and with my song will I praise Him. {8} The LORD is their strength, and He is the saving strength of His anointed. {9} Save Your people, and bless Your inheritance: feed them and lift them up for ever."

What a great way David has of putting things like this.

### **Long Period of God's Silence**

We seem to be living in the long period of God's silence. Why do you think that might be? And what might He say to us if He decided not to keep silent? Actually, it is that second question that might give us pause, when we ask God not to be silent, we ought to think "Wait, wait, wait, do I really want to hear what God has to say?"

The thing about David, and other Kings of Israel, they had recognized reputable prophets to speak for God. The Bible was being written in their day, and so they needed that kind of thing. It seemed odd to me, when I thought about it, that David, who was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22), that God never spoke to him personally. God spoke to David through a prophet at all times and when He did speak, David might have wished he hadn't, because God doesn't see any need to speak to us when we are doing well. I've often said this, if you see a prophet walking down the road to your house, it's bad news, because God doesn't send a prophet out to pat you on the head and say, "O what a good boy you are, you're doing so well." When we are doing well, God just looks at us and says, "You're doing what you're supposed to do." Our task is, just to keep on, keeping on.

Now another thing they did not have was a comprehensive Bible that we all have today. If we call out to God, "Why are you silent to us?", like David did, He is apt to reply, "Well, I already did, read the Bible!"

### **Lazarus and the Rich Man**

One of Jesus' parables comes to mind, the one about Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19). He said, "There was a certain rich man, who dined sumptuously every day. {20} There was a beggar named Lazarus, who laid at his gate, he was so sick and the dogs came and licked his sores and {21} He would just have loved to have had a crumb or two from this rich man's table, {22} Well they both died and Lazarus, the beggar, was carried into Abraham's bosom and the rich man was carried into a place of torment in the flame." This was something that the Pharisees believed, so Jesus uses it to make His point.

Well they sat there and they could see each other across this gulf and the rich man calls out to Abraham and says, {27} "O I pray father Abraham that you would send Lazarus to my father's house, {28} 'I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' {29} "Abraham said to him, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them."

What an incredible statement Abraham just made. He said, "Send him to my brothers, send somebody back from the dead to talk to them." Abraham said, "They have Moses and the prophets. They have the written law let them hear that." He said, {30} "O no, father Abraham, if somebody went to them from the dead, they will repent."

Abraham's reply in this parable is just devastating. He said, "If they will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

I suppose that we should take away from this parable a simple truth. God has already spoken to us and if we won't listen to the written testimony, speaking to us, walking into our bedroom, appearing in an apparition above our bed, or in our closet or wherever it may be, is pointless. If you don't listen then you won't listen.

### **Testimony of Jesus**

Also, living in our generation, we have even a more sure testimony than anything they had until Jesus came on the scene. The writer of Hebrews starts out his book this way by saying, "In the past, God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets, at many times in various ways, {2} But in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things and through whom He made the universe."

So we not only have Moses and the prophets, we have the words of Jesus recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Frankly, if a person won't listen to Jesus, why would we think that if God should speak to us, that we would listen to Him. Actually, the testimony of the Bible is, we wouldn't!

### **Testimony of Peter**

Peter wrote in his second letter, chapter 1 and verse 16, "We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. {17} We were eyewitnesses of his Majesty, for He received honor and glory from God the Father, when the voice came to Him from the majestic glory saying, "This is my son, whom I love, in whom I am well pleased. {18} We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven, we were with Him on the sacred mountain and {19} We have the word of the prophets made more certain. You will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day star arises in your hearts."

Now this testimony to the people to whom Peter was writing had not heard the voice that Peter heard. He was testifying to them, it was good if they believed, but if they didn't believe Peter's testimony, there was no point in having Jesus appear to them.

### **Famine of the Word**

Looking down through time, Amos, one of the Old Testament prophets, warned us about one aspect of this. He said in chapter 8 and verse 11, "Behold, the days come," saith the Lord God, "I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, not a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. {12} They shall wander from sea to sea and from North to the East and they shall run to and fro, and seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it."

Funny thing about this, in our country, how far do you have to look for a Bible? Chances are you have one right there in your house, right there on your coffee table, or over there on the bookshelf. You don't have to go very far to find a Bible.

What people are looking for is a more current message from God, something that is really up to date. Something right up there in our world today and God isn't talking. Why should He?

### **Setting Up Idols**

Ezekiel 14 is interesting in the light of what we are talking about here, and that is: Why is God Silent? Ezekiel said, "Some of the elders of Israel came to me and sat down in front of me. {2} And the word of the Lord came to me, {3} "Son of Man, these men have set up idols in their hearts and put wicked stumbling blocks before their faces. Should I let them inquire of Me at all?"

Now think about that. We have people who are setting up idols in front of your face. Back in those days, the idols would have been Molech and Dagon. I think today we are a little more sophisticated in our idols and they are probably BMWs, Mercedes, new houses and so forth. But we still tend to have our idols. The stumbling blocks that are being talked about here, are the sins that they do.

He said, "These people, who are elders and supposed to be leaders, their hearts are not right. Should I let them inquire of Me? I tell you what, you speak to them and tell them, this is what the Lord God says, {4} "When any Israelite sets up idols in his heart, and puts a wicked stumbling block before his face, and then goes to a prophet, I the Lord will answer him myself in keeping with his great idolatry. {5} I will do this to recapture the hearts of the people who have deserted me for their idols. {6} Say this to the house of Israel, "This is what the Lord God says, "Repent, turn from your idols, renounce all your detestable practices."

### **Repent**

You want a word from God, there it is, repent and turn away from your detestable practices, so God isn't silent to us after all, is He? He spoke a long time ago and told us what we should be doing.

Let's continue in Ezekiel 14 and verse 7, "'When any Israelite or any alien living in Israel separates himself from Me and sets up idols in his heart and puts a wicked stumbling block before his face and then goes to a prophet to inquire of Me, I the LORD will answer him myself. {8} I will set my face against that man and make him an example and a byword. I will cut him off from My people."

Do you realize what he is actually saying, "You're better off if you're going to live this way to just live this way, you're better off if you pursue your idols, you're better off if you pursue your sins. Just go do it. Don't go do it and then come back and pretend to be inquiring of God.

Then the LORD says this, {9} "'If the prophet is enticed to utter a prophecy, I the LORD have enticed that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand against him and destroy him, the prophet, from among My people Israel. {10} They will bear their guilt--the prophet will be as guilty as the one who consults him. {11} Then the people of Israel will no longer stray from Me, nor will

they defile themselves anymore with all their sins. They will be My people, and I will be their God, declares the LORD God."

Now this reads like a very strange idea, because in the King James version, it says, "And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the LORD have deceived that prophet."

The N.I.V. boys changed it to 'enticed.'

### **Would God Allow a Prophet To Deceive You?**

Would God allow a prophet to deceive us? Oh yes, yes indeed. The assumption is, if you go to him with these things in your heart, you want a certain kind of answer. So God says, "Okay, give them the answer that they want" but then He says "I'm going to punish the prophet and the priest and the people the same way."

### **Wonder About God**

Now here's another one of those occasions that makes us wonder about God. It is first Kings chapter 22 , and verse 19, Micaiah says, "Hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne with all the host of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left. {20} And the LORD said, 'Who will persuade Ahab that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead?'"

Now what's going on here is, the King of Judah has come up to join the King of Israel and they are talking about going out in the battle and they want to inquire of God, should we go or should we not? All of the false prophets said, "Oh yes go, they had little ways of showing it and demonstrating it with their little shows, and then finally, {7} the King of Judah, Jehoshaphat, says, "I am not comfortable with this," and asked, "Don't you have a prophet of the LORD somewhere around here of whom we can inquire of?" {8} The King of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, "There is still one man through whom we can inquire of the LORD, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad. He is Micaiah son of Imlah."

"Well, bring him in," and this is what he told him, "I saw God standing up there, and He asked, "Who will persuade Ahab that he may go and fall at Ramoth Gilead." "One suggested this, and another that. {21} Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD and said, 'I will persuade him.' {22} 'By what means?' the LORD asked, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,' God said, 'You will succeed in persuading him, Go and do it.' {23} Now therefore the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours, while the LORD has spoken disaster and evil for you."

What a conundrum this man Ahab faces. He has only been hearing nothing but good from prophet after prophet and along comes this one guy that he hates anyway, and he says "I know what they are telling you."

I don't really know whether this is intended to be merely ironic, or satire or just what he intends here, but the picture he presents is, that a spirit comes before God and says he will be a lying

spirit in the mouth of all of these prophets and He, Ahab, will go up and die. So, that is what he did. He believed them. The prophet of God came in and said, "O no, you are going to go up there and you are going to die."

Now here is what I think the message is here, if you don't play straight with God, why should you expect Him to play straight with you? Maybe there's another answer, but you know, there's a danger of apologizing for God which is really kind of pointless. We are better off to read the Bible, take it as it is and go forward with the main lesson. The main lesson here is clear. Don't go to God unless you go with your whole heart. You can not go to Him and maintain all the sins in your life.

### **Why Is God Silent?**

Now back to my original question. Why is God silent to us? Well, I can hear God saying, "Do you have any idea what price has been made to put this Bible on your coffee table? To make Bibles available so cheap, to find them in hotel rooms all over the country? Do you know? Do you have any idea how many people have suffered and how much they have suffered? Do you realize that people have died in order to preserve this book down through time for you and I honor these people and I set them up on a pedestal. How should you approach this book, that we call the Bible?"

### **Close Encounter with God**

First understand what it is. The Bible is the written testimony of men who have had a close encounter with God. God didn't stand over them and dictate the Bible and have them slowly write it all down and repeat it for them so they got it word for word correct. He spoke to them, He moved them to write in their own words, what they heard and what they saw. The Bible, when it is talking for God, uses what we call 'indirect quotation.' You can ask your English teacher what that means as opposed to a 'direct quotation.'

The Bible is not one book, it is a collection of books, by a whole host of witnesses. You are like a person sitting on a jury and they bring in witness after witness after witness for you to listen to and hear what they say.

The second thing is that you should read the whole Bible, cover to cover, not once but repeatedly, not to regulate every moment of your life according to the letter of the law, but to inform your conscience and to equip you to make right decisions in your life.

### **Literalism and Parables**

Some people take every word of the Bible literally and they wander off into absurdity. Anytime you wonder whether to take the Bible literally, consider that Jesus taught in parables. Parables are allegories, not history. The events that Jesus describes in His parables are not real, they are symbolic, and if you are willing to be misled, you will be. That's why some understood the parables and others did not.

## **Cut Off Your Right Hand**

Another caution about literalism in the Bible comes in a shocking statement that Jesus made, it is in Matthew 5 and verse 29, in the Sermon on the Mount. "If your right eye offend you, pluck it out and throw it away. It is profitable for you that one of your members should perish and not that your whole body should be cast into hell. {30} If your right hand offends you, cut it off, cast it from you, it is profitable for you that one of your members should perish, and not that your whole body should be cast into hell." I have heard of a real incident, where a man literally cut off his hand because of this statement. Now they may have been drunk when they did it, they were certainly stupid when they did it. Jesus assumed that you would know, if you stole something, it is not your hand that is to blame, it is your mind.

The purpose of the Bible is not to tell you what to do at every step, it is to acquaint you with the actions and statements of God in history, when He was not silent, and thus to educate your conscience about right and wrong. One of the primary ways this is done, is to acquaint yourself with the various applications of divine law. Let me explain.

## **Law of God Is Revelatory**

I once said that the Law of God is not a regulatory device, but a revelatory device. What does that mean? Simply, the purpose of divine law is not to control, but to instruct, because God has no interest in taking our freedom away from us. He wants us to know what we're doing, whether it is going to be good for us or bad.

Some of the law is designed to direct the affairs of a community. In other words, it's administrative. The instructions that Moses gave regarding penalties for lawbreakers, like murderers, for example.

## **Don't Muzzle The Ox**

Most law is a statement of principle. Let me give you a classic example. In Deuteronomy 25 and verse 4, "You shall not muzzle the ox when he treads out the grain."

Now here's my question, is this an animal rights statement? What difference does it make if you feed the ox before you put it to work? What if you don't have an ox, does it have no application to you at all?

Now this is easy for the preacher who says that the law was abolished, Paul didn't think so. Writing to the Corinthians, a group of mainly Gentile Christians, Paul said this in first Corinthians 9 and verse 9, "It is written in the Law of Moses, do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain. Is it about oxen that God is concerned? {10} Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest." Now that's ajar to anyone who thinks the Law of Moses was abolished or nailed to the cross, or is irrelevant today, but here's the apostle Paul citing it and saying it is written for us.

## Aphorisms

The stunning thing about this is, the law is presented to man in the form of aphorisms. What is an aphorism? It is a concise, memorable statement that contains a truth. What is the truth about the law of the ox? The best way to see it, is to consider the context of what Paul wrote.

In chapter 9 of first Corinthians and verse 1, "Am I not free, Am I not an apostle? Haven't I seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Aren't you the result of my work in the Lord? I may not be an apostle to other people, but surely I am to you because you were the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. Now this is my defense of those who sit in judgment of me."

Now mind you, this chapter is about Paul and not about oxen. "My answer {3} to those who sit in judgment of me, {4} Don't we have the right to food and drink? {5} Don't we have the right to take a believing wife with us, like the other apostles, like the Lord's brother, like Cephas, {6} Or is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living?"

Do you see what he was driving at here? Basically he is saying, "Is it wrong for me to have food and drink from you people, as a result of the work I'm doing for you, or are Barnabus and I the only ones who have to hold down a job somewhere so we can serve God?" {7} "Who serves as a soldier at his own expense?" Who plants a vineyard and doesn't eat of the grapes? Who tends the flock and doesn't drink the milk? Now, do I say this merely for a human point of view, doesn't the law say the same thing? For it is written in the Law of Moses, do not muzzle an ox while it's treading out the grain."

Does God care about oxen? No, not really. He says this for our sakes. It was written for us and He says, "If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap the material harvest from you?"

What Paul is saying to us is, "Look, the law was given to us as a principle and you're supposed to read it and you're supposed to sit there and think about it and look beyond the literal statement in what God is driving at."

## God Has Not Been Silent

Now I said all that to make a point, God has not been silent at all! He has spoken again and again in history and He then said to his servants, "Write that down," which they did, from memory because they were rarely in the position to write while God was talking.

David had a legitimate question when he ask, "Why are you silent to me?" We don't! We have the record of what God had to say, when He was a long way from silent. He still speaks to us in the pages of the Bible.

What do you do about it? Well, make it a point to read the Bible every day of your life. If you don't get the habit, you will not do it. The best way to do it, is the first hour of the day, perhaps a half hour, whatever you decide to do. Then spend some time thinking about what you have read



I once heard a psychologist say that the human mind is like a closet you can never clean out, everything that goes into your mind stays there forever. It's a closet you can never clean out. By a process that is not very well understood, events in our life can trigger memories of those things we put in the closet, right at the time we need them most.

Why is God silent? He is not silent at all!

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*The late Ronald L. Dart was a Christian evangelist whose teachings still inspire thousands of people around the world. His legacy spans decades. For more information about the teachings of Ronald L. Dart, visit [RLDEA.com](http://RLDEA.com) where you will find booklets, articles, sermons, Bible studies, and books by Mr. Dart.*

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### **Discussion Questions**

1. Why do you think God is silent?
2. What do you think He would say to us if He decided to not be silent?
3. Do you agree with Mr. Dart that one reason He doesn't speak to us like in the days of old, is because He already has through the Bible?
4. Do you believe that the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man was not only meant to prove a point in Jesus' time, but also to caution us today?
5. Do you also agree with Mr. Dart that one of the problems today is that people are looking for a "current message from God"?
6. Do you have an 'idols' in your life that you need to destroy?
7. What do you think of Mr. Dart's point of how valuable our Bible's are because of the great costs of many to make it available for us today?
8. How important to you is your Bible? Is it more important than let's say your cell phone?
9. Have you ever read it from cover to cover?
10. The real truth is God has not really been silent. So, the real question should be, how well are you listening to God?