

RESPONDING TO THE ORACLES OF GOD:

"Come, Buy & Eat..."



"Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy & eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

Isaiah 55:1

God gives mankind Himself in His Word! The Creator of the universe; the Lord God Almighty lets us in on His thoughts and feelings in every crevice of the Holy Scriptures. Without doubt, God "bares His soul" and "unveils His heart," as He communicates through *Living Oracles*.

The word **oracle** is translated from the Greek word *logion*, speaking *not* of "The Word of God," but "words from God" or "divine communications." God's oracles (or words) are especially vivid in the Books of the Prophets. In these writings the Lord our God communicates both His pain and His pleasure to the children of Israel. We hear Him speak. We feel His emotions jumping off the pages and touching us through the text!

The Intimacy of God's Oracles

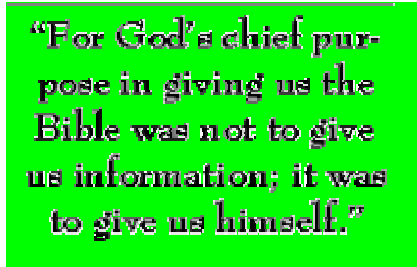
"The Bible is an intensely personal book," writes Margaret Parker, author of *Unlocking the Power of God's Word* (InterVarsity Press 1991). God's oracles represent how "the words of a loving heavenly Father speaks to his wayward human children to call them back to himself." As Parker describes so eloquently, we may read the Bible looking for information about God and ourselves, about history, about how to live successfully; and the *Holy Bible* does give us this information. "But it is not principally an abstract philosophical treatise on the nature of God and Humanity," argues Parker. "It is not principally a dry history text crammed with facts to memorize about people long dead. It is not principally an instruction manual outlining helpful guidelines for living. At the heart it is more like a personal letter or a face-to-face conversation."

This is so exhilarating! When we read God's letters and participate in the lively tones of His verse, we will never see "cold words on a flat page." We will experience the "great high God stooping low to look us in the eye or whisper in our ear," encourages Parker. "For God's chief purpose in giving us the Bible was not to give us information; it was to give us himself."

The Purpose of God's Oracles

With this understanding, we can finally embrace the purpose for which God has chosen to communicate with us in His Holy Writings. It's exciting to consider the reality that the

The Bible is God's Great Idea! He wants to give us Himself, and He wants to give us new life through His Life! He communicates with us in this way to change us deeply as we encounter Him intimately. "He has spoken not just to love us but to judge us, not just to comfort us but to challenge us," says Parker.



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The Power of God's Oracles

Through the words of the Bible God takes hold of us, pulls us closer to him, making us more and more like Jesus! The power of the written word lies in the ability of its divine author to personally make us new as we hear, see and feel him in His love letters and heroic adventure stories.

I agree with Parker that one chapter in the Old Testament, Isaiah 55, really embodies God's communiqué through all of Scripture. Here, the prophet addresses strong words to God's people, the Israelites, to encourage and challenge them as they languished in Babylonian exile.

But the message of the chapter is timeless. Speaking to Israel then and to us today, Isaiah 55 embodies the nature and purpose of **all** of God's Word—the whole canon of Scripture. The chapter communicates personally and intimately. It reveals the deep and abiding concern that the Lord has us as His people. *God speaks directly in all but two verses.* The opening verse displays the anguish of God's heart. The people he loves has turned away from him and are suffering the tragic consequences of their sinfulness. God pleads orally with them, using imagery, drama and strong metaphors to make his earnest love and commitment known:

Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear and your soul shall live. (Isaiah 55: 1-3)

The first word, *Ho*, in this oracle is an exclamation of pity. It is the complete opposite of *Yo*, which would represent a party decree. God is pleading with His people to listen to Him and to Hear his words. "Come," God says over and over. "Come to Me." It's not theology or philosophy that God wants to give—its Himself! "Come to Me; hear Me, that your soul may live." It's in *knowing* God intimately; in responding to Him wholeheartedly and in accepting His invitations and overtures that we find new life—the abundant kind of life!

The Imagery of God's Oracles

At the end of the Isaiah 55, God uses the poetic imagery to unveil the eternal power His word has to accomplish what He desires. Again, He's communicating so personally, instructing us about Himself:

For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:10-11)

Our God is telling us that just as He created rain and snow with the power to bring new life out of the earth; He has designed His Word with the power to bring newness of life to men's souls. But there is more here than meets the eye. The Lord is also employing the literary element of imagery (*something seen and natural*) to explain the faithful element of His spoken word (*that which is unseen and spiritual*). What most of us miss in this passage is the "poignant lessons" our Father is attempting to teach us through this comparison. We must *first* understand *how* the natural elements of rain and snow (and their differing seasons) work to create the bud and seed to eventually produce bread. These are progressive steps that simply do not happen all at the same time! When we comprehend the natural analogy God has given us through nature; then we can more fully embrace the "differing seasons" and "progressive steps" of how His Word is working in the earth and in our lives—spiritually!

The Imprint of God's Oracles

Never forget that the God of the universe is speaking directly to us in the Scriptures! Oh, how we should approach this "learning time" with renewed excitement and enthusiasm! *The Lord has chosen to place a lasting imprint on us as we encounter Him in the Bible!* He is the Author that speaks to His readers. The very next time you open His Book, *pause* first! Then offer Him your fresh eyes and attentive ears in prayer. God is yet speaking to His children! Listen well and learn much!