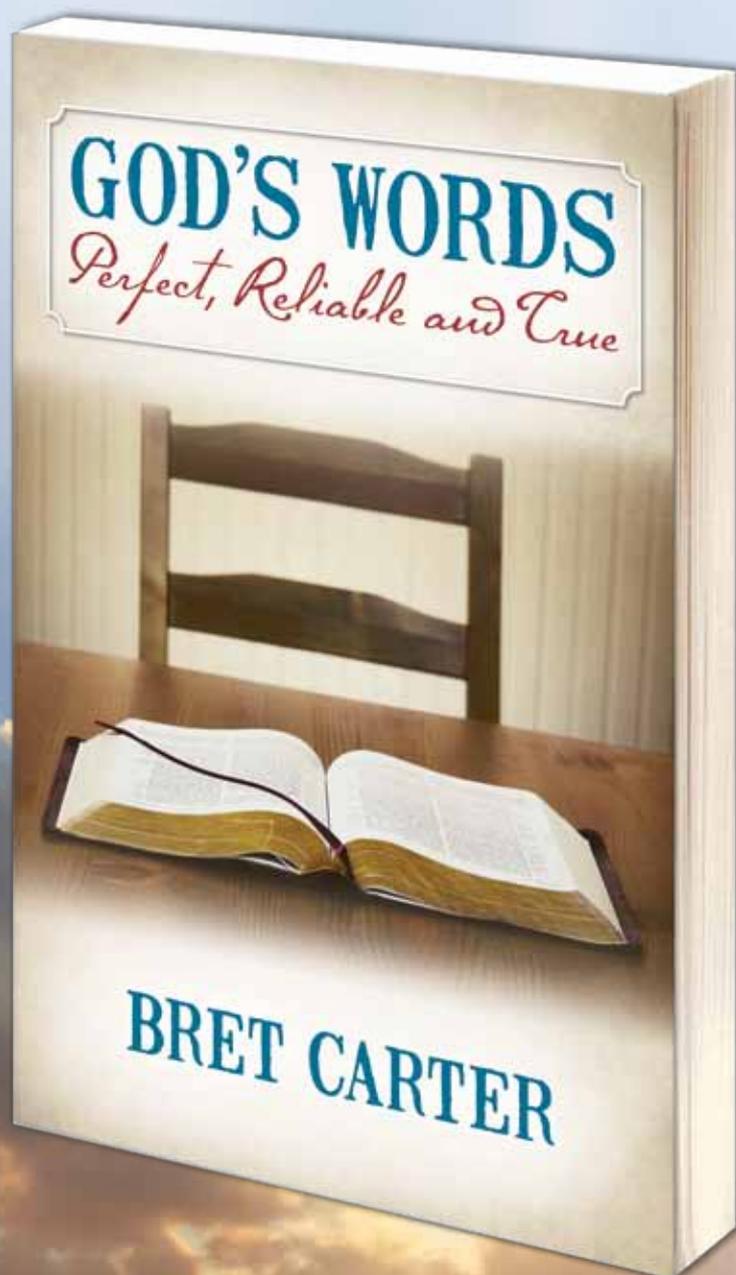


THE MOUTH OF GOD

Book Excerpt From *God's Words*

by Bret Carter



David executed a young man needlessly. The young man was an Amalekite who did himself in by lying. Although King Saul had committed suicide, the young man reported to David that he himself had actually killed the king, thinking he would be praised for dispatching David's enemy.

On the contrary, David was not happy: "Your blood is on your head, for your mouth has testified against you, saying, 'I have killed the Lord's anointed'" (2 Samuel 1:16). David ordered his men to kill the young man immediately.

It was the mouth. Although, in this case, it failed to represent the truth, the mouth testified against the young man, resulting in his early death. It was assumed that the young man's mouth told it like it was.

This kind of thinking is also found in the trial of Jesus. His words were truth, but that truth was offensive enough to those hearing Him that it resulted in His death. His accusers made it clear why they believed this case was closed: "What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth" (Luke 22:71).

It wasn't because of the look in His eyes or His body language. It was His mouth. Those present believed that the mouth was an accurate representative of a person.

A Reliable System

For the most part, a man has control over his mouth. There are occasions when his mouth might betray him and hundreds of ways for his words to get

tangled into meaningless or embarrassing phrases. We can all look back on other times and cringe, remembering how our anger or ignorance led us to say something foolish.

However, the majority of the time our mouths faithfully express what we want them to. If the mouth consistently failed in this respect, we would find another way of expressing ourselves.

Jesus indicated the mouth was more than suitable for measuring a person: “The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart” (Luke 6:45). The mouth is not just a device that produces words; it is an audible version of the heart.¹

Because the mouth speaks for the person, it carries a certain amount of authority. If this is true for man, this is likely to be also true for God. Anyone verified as God’s “mouth” would accurately present the words of God’s heart and mind. This means that any “mouth” of God would also carry authority.

It is safe to assume that any person who served as the mouth of God would have some reliability – at the very least, the same degree of reliability we count on when using our own mouths. Fashioned by the divine power of God (who uses even the free will of His creation to shape His plans), one might even conclude that when it comes to the mouth of God, regardless of human flaws, nothing will be tangled up or confused. God does not stutter.

There were several times when God assured the reader of His words that what had been written was an accurate delivery of what He wanted to say. One way of “sealing” the words to be delivered was by pointing out the fact it came from His own mouth. The message was sealed with the phrase “the mouth of the LORD has spoken” (Isaiah 1:20; 58:14; Micah 4:4). This implied that whoever received what had been spoken would treat the message as authority.

Words and Actions

In fact, the idea was that you better not interfere with what had come from God’s mouth. His Word, as delivered, was so authoritative that it would be

unwise to stand in its way. “So will My Word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11). When God spoke, it was expected that things would happen. Just as with us, God’s mouth was expected to be strongly associated with His actions.

When a man’s words do not match his actions, this usually means his integrity is in question. Such a conflict is a symptom of duplicity. The hands should be in correlation with the mouth. Solomon saw this integrity of

them in pieces by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of My mouth” (Hosea 6:5). The same violent parallel is described in the New Testament as well: “Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming” (2 Thessalonians 2:8). After this, the almost surreal imagery found toward the end of God’s Word is no surprise: “Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth” (Revelation 2:16).² To oppose such authority would be foolish

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words and action in God. In his prayer, Solomon said to God: “That which You have promised him; indeed You have spoken with Your mouth and have fulfilled it with Your hand as it is this day” (1 Kings 8:24). When it comes to people, words and actions do not always match, but when it comes to God, the unity of His purpose through what He says and what He does is flawless.

Destructive and Creative

The mouth of God is associated with power and authority – the kind that defies any opposition. Several passages address this in stark images. Sometimes, it is expressed through the metaphor of fire: “His breath kindles coals, and a flame goes forth from His mouth” (Job 41:21). “Smoke went up out of His nostrils, and fire from His mouth devoured; coals were kindled by it” (Psalm 18:8). The mouth of God is potentially destructive, depending on the nature of those who hear it: “Behold, I am making My words in your mouth fire and this people wood, and it will consume them” (Jeremiah 5:14). Being on the flammable end of this analogy, we would all do well to take this description to heart.

In some places, the images are even more violent: “Therefore I have hewn

and dangerous. There is no indication in Scripture that the mouth of God – whoever or whatever might have been representing it – produced anything less than this kind of authority.

The destructive nature of this authority is also accompanied by its power to create. When God created the universe out of nothing, God chose to speak it into existence: “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host” (Psalm 33:6).

Just as the words from the mouth of God can mean destruction for those who oppose Him, His words are also nothing less than life for those who turn to Him. Job realized this: “I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food” (Job 23:12). One way or the other, the mouth of God determines our survival.

Authorized Words

If His hearers are so dependent on His words, He would certainly make sure that any vessel of delivery He selected would be a secure one. God chose specific people to be His mouth, and at no point did He ever indicate they would be iffy messengers:

“I will raise up a prophet from among

their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him. But the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die” (Deuteronomy 18:18-20).

The message was so important that any tampering with it by even the

messenger himself would cost him his life. To speak on behalf of God without having His full endorsement was a serious offense.

All in all, God apparently believed that this method of communication was more than suitable. “I have put My words in your mouth” (Isaiah 51:16). “Behold, I have put My words in your mouth” (Jeremiah 1:9). “God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time” (Acts 3:21). As far as He was concerned, His “mouth” would say only what He wanted to say.

Not everyone was qualified for such an honor. Anyone who showed lack of respect for God’s words was rejected: “But to the wicked God says, ‘What right have you to tell of My statutes and to take My covenant in your mouth?’ For you hate discipline and you cast My words behind you” (Psalm 50:16-17). There was a clear distinction between the one who was authorized to speak as the mouth of God and those who were speaking from their own minds: “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility; they speak a vision of their own imagination, not from the mouth of the LORD” (Jeremiah 23:16).³

The Bible contains the words as delivered by the mouth of God. And we can be confident that the words of God have survived any man-made complications. Even when God allowed Job’s friends to express freely their deep lack of wisdom, any non-truth was clearly identified as such before the book of Job was brought to a close (Job 42:7-8). And if God chose someone as His mouth, you can rest assured that this appointed person spoke only what God wanted him to speak.

Anything that came from the “mouth” of God was untainted by inner conflict or outside influence: “All the utterances of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing crooked or perverted in them” (Proverbs 8:8). No matter the general turmoil of the world, when God spoke, His message was delivered loud and clear. □

Bret Carter teaches at Hyland Christian School in Westminster, Colo., and serves as the editor of Rocky Mountain Christian. He attends Brighton Church of Christ and can be contacted at carterbret@live.com.

Endnotes

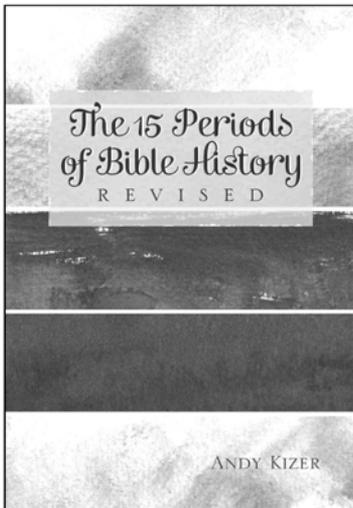
¹ In Isaiah 6, the prophet was allowed a vision of the presence of God. The prophet’s initial reaction was despair. Isaiah had a deep sense of being unworthy of God’s presence, and he traced this shame back to his own mouth: “I am a man of unclean lips” (v. 5). In this vision, God purified Isaiah, and He did so by focusing on Isaiah’s mouth (v. 7). This again indicates that the nature of man is strongly connected with his mouth and the words that are formed there.

² See also Revelation 1:16.

³ See also Jeremiah 14:14.



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