

What God Says Happens

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[0:00] This week we have just a single lesson that we'll do from God's word and I'd like just to have a show of hands on three questions.

First of all, how many of you have ever gone fishing? Okay, we've got a lot of anglers here. How many of you have ever found money inside of a fish that you've caught?

Nobody. Okay, that's unusual. How many of you have ever read of a man who caught a fish with money in his mouth?

Okay, where did you read this? In your Bible. Okay, we're getting warm. Where in your Bible? Let's see if we can narrow it down. In the Gospels. Which Gospel? It's only found in one. Matthew. Matthew. What chapter? Well, I think you're on to a passage.

[1:06] At least this is what you're telling me. That it's found in the Bible. That it's found in Matthew. Perhaps you're thinking, Jim, of Matthew 17. Let's turn there and see if this is indeed the place where we read of someone who caught a fish with money in its mouth.

Matthew 17. I don't know if this is what you're referring to, but if it is, you'll soon be able to tell us. It's Matthew 17, 24, perhaps. After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two drachma tax came to Peter and asked, Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?

Yes, he does, he replied. When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. What do you think, Simon? he asked. From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes? From their own sons or from others? From others, Peter answered. Then the sons are exempt, Jesus said to him. You see, there were exemptions 2,000 years ago to taxes.

[2:20] But, so that we may not offend them, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch, open its mouth, and you will find a four drachma coin.

Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours. So, no, this is not the passage, is it? It never does tell us about a man who caught a fish with a coin in its mouth.

All it tells us is that Jesus told his disciple Peter to go and do this and this would happen and so on. But it never tells us about a man who caught a fish with a coin in its mouth, does it?

That struck me just my last time reading through the gospel of Matthew. It woke me up that morning. I said, wait a minute. Why doesn't Matthew tell us that?

This is a cliffhanger. He leads us right up to the end and then he just drops it. And I'm wanting to know, did Peter go fishing? And if he did, what happened? But he doesn't tell us.

[3:25] Here's another question for you. Why is that? Why do you think, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Matthew doesn't tell us what happened? Anyone?

Want to venture a guess? I don't know that there's a right or a wrong answer here. Well, if you believe that Jesus is who he is, then you would believe that's true. If you would believe who Jesus is who he is, then you would believe that it happened just as he said it would.

Right? He doesn't need to tell us, in other words, does he? Matthew doesn't need. There's no need to tell us. By now, in Matthew's gospel, if we've been reading, as we do read books from the beginning toward the end, by now we would have found out who Jesus is, as Mickey has said.

And who this one is who speaks to his disciple about such things with such confidence as if this is what's going to happen. We see back in Matthew chapter, so what we find, that by now we've been introduced to Jesus as the Lord God.

He is God. And when he speaks, it happens, and it happens exactly according to his words. We've seen it over and over in this gospel. Back in chapter 8 and verse 3, Jesus just speaks to the man with leprosy.

[4:56] He says, be clean. And Matthew tells us, immediately he was cured of his leprosy. So there he does tell us. He doesn't leave us hanging. He doesn't say, be clean, and then, did he get

healed or not?

No. Matthew says, he was immediately cured of his leprosy. In chapter 8, verse 5, there's this centurion who tells Jesus about his servant at home who's paralyzed and suffering terribly. And Jesus said to him, I will go and heal him. I don't deserve to have you come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me, and I tell this one go, and he goes, and that one come, and he comes. And I say to my servant, do this, and he does it. And Jesus comments on the greatness of this man's faith as a Gentile when he says to him, go, it will be done just as you believed it would. This man believed that Jesus has power to just speak a word, and miles away, it happens just as he said that it would. And so Matthew doesn't leave us hanging, but he goes on to tell us in verse 13, and his servant was healed at that very hour.

[6:19] It did happen just as he said it would. In chapter 8 and verse 16, the Bible, Matthew says, he drove out the spirits with a word.

He spoke, and the demons left. What he said happens. Come out, and they came out. Matthew 8, 23, the disciples are in the boat.

A furious storm arises. The boat is taking water. It's going down. They wake him up. Lord, save us. We're going to drown. And he got up and had a talk with the wind and the waves.

He spoke, be still. Calm down. And Matthew tells us, immediately, it was calm. Just as he said, what he says changes things.

All kinds of things. In the same chapter 8, verse 32, there's two demon-possessed men, and Jesus spoke to the demons and said, go.

[7:19] And you remember, they went and went into the pigs and plunged into the lake where the pigs drowned. Chapter 9 and verse 6, he speaks to a paralyzed man.

Get up. Take your mat and go home. And what happened? The man got up and went home. So what did you expect by now? Chapter 12, verse 13, a man with a shriveled hand is in the synagogue on the Sabbath.

And Jesus said to the man, stretch out your hand. What happened? He stretched it out, and it was completely restored, just as the other. Again, what did you expect?

So that by the time we come to chapter 17, we've seen a pattern repeated over and over. And it's simply this, that whenever Jesus speaks, it happens.

And it always happens exactly like he says it would. So here Jesus just tells Peter what to do and what would happen. And that's all that Matthew thinks he needs to tell us.

[8:22] Now, how many of you think that Peter went fishing? All right, yeah. Do you think he found a fish with a coin in its mouth?

A four drachma coin? Just the amount needed to pay their temple tax for two. Why are you convinced that Peter went fishing, as Jesus told him?

Because another time, Jesus told Peter to go fishing, didn't he? In fact, the time when Jesus first called Peter to come and be his disciple in Luke chapter 5.

You remember Peter and the others were fishing all night, and now they're on the shore. They're mending their nets, and Jesus is teaching the people, and he needs a pulpit.

So he gets into the boat and pushes out from the land and preaches to the people. And after he's done, he says, Peter, go out fishing and catch some fish. And Peter says, Lord, we've been fishing all night.

[9:20] They're simply not biting. That's just the way it is. I'm a fisherman, I know they're not biting, but because you say so, I will. And he goes out, puts down the net, and they catch more than what the boat can handle.

Jesus spoke. Peter obeyed just because he said so, and the catch was made.

So we've seen Peter take the Lord at his word before and learned that Jesus has creative power to change reality with his word just by speaking.

So this is a demonstration that Jesus is God. There is no one but God who can speak and change reality as he does.

In Genesis 1.1, the first verse in the Bible, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And how did he create? He spoke.

[10:25] Let there be light. And there was light. Just like that. Let the waters under the sky be gathered to one place. And let the dry ground appear.

And it was so. God said, and it was so. God said, and it was so. And this creative power of God's word is celebrated by his people in worship.

It's a reason to fear the Lord. It's a reason to stand in awe of him and be amazed at him. And so in their Psalm 33, their songbook, the Old Testament songbook, they worshiped God by saying, by the word of the Lord were the heavens made.

Their starry host, by the breath of his mouth, he spoke and it came to be. He commanded and it stood firm. And so it's the witness of Scripture that God and God alone has such creative power in the mere words he speaks.

So everything that we see is the result of God speaking. And now everything that we see still responds to the voice of God.

[11:37] The wind, the waves, the snow, the rain. It still responds to the voice of its creator. You remember how Paul speaks about the new birth, that there was nothing but darkness in his heart.

And then God spoke and said, let there be light. And there was light in his dark heart. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God. So the same spoken word that brought the physical creation into being is the same powerful word that brings spiritual creation into being.

It creates a new creature. Paul was dark. He did not see the glory of God in the face of Christ. And God said, let there be light in Saul of Tarsus' heart. And suddenly he sees.

He understands. Jesus is God. I must worship him. No longer persecute him. Well, it was the same in our new birth.

God spoke and light came to us. Turn to Isaiah 33. There's an interesting passage here with regard to the power of God's spoken word.

[12:49] In Isaiah 34, we have Edom, the neighborly nation of Israel, but not acting very neighborly.

They were enemies of Israel and often abused them. And now God is saying, I'm going to rise up and judge this nation for what they did to my people. In chapter 34 and verse 8, he says, for the Lord has a day of vengeance, a year of retribution to uphold Zion's cause.

And he says he's going to destroy Moab's land. He's going to leave it desolate and uninhabited by people. In verse 13, he says, thorns will overrun her citadels, her castles.

Nestles and brambles will overrun her strongholds. She'll become a haunt for jackals and a home for owls. Desert creatures and hyenas, wild goats, night creatures, owls will nest there.

There also the falcons will gather, each with its mate. Now look at verse 16. Look in the scroll of the Lord and read. Not one of these will be missing.

[13:56] Not one will lack her mate. Now that's the word of the Lord. Not one will be missing. Not one will lack her mate. But how will it be accomplished?

Notice how verse 16 ends. For it is his mouth that is given the order, and his spirit will gather them together. So it was the same way when God said to Noah, I'm going to bring the animals two by two into the ark.

His word went out, and then his spirit went out and gathered according to his word. So here, Moab is going to be desolate, no longer people dwelling there, just the wild animals, each with its mate.

Well, there's the word of the Lord, but it doesn't just fall to the ground like our words do, unheeded and unbeyed. No, his spirit goes with his word and causes even things like falcons and owls and goats to gather in this place and live.

So we see again the power of God's word to change reality because his spirit goes with his word. Isaiah 55 is another passage that shows us the power of God's word.

[15:11] And he tells us in verse 10 that God's word operates like the snow or the rain, the water cycle. And so the waters come down from heaven, don't they?

And in condensation, and whether it's rain or snow. And then they go back up into heaven through evaporation. There's the water cycle, and he's referring to this.

But he says these waters that come down from heaven, they don't go back up into heaven until they've fulfilled the purpose for which God sent them. In other words, this water cycle is not just some mindless thing that's happened by random evolution.

No, God has a plan, and he speaks his plan into action, and so it rains. But God's plan in sending rain has a purpose to provide seed for the sower and food for the eater.

And only when it's done its work does it then go back up into the heavens again. Verse 11, Nobody but God can say that, that my words will never come back empty.

[16:27] They'll always accomplish. They'll always bring about the very thing that I've said. So we see the witness of the Old Testament to the fact that God speaks and it happens.

Now here we are in the New Testament, and we see none other than this Jesus of Nazareth doing what only God can do. God is saying to us, this is my son. This is God in the flesh.

Hear him. So here we are in Matthew 17, and he tells Peter what he's to do. Think of the sovereign power. Think of the control of God to be able to bring all of that to pass according to his word.

Would you agree that it's safe to say that not every fish in the sea had money in its mouth?

Especially a four drachma coin. He was essentially fishing for one fish that day, right?

In the lake. And Jesus said the first fish that you catch, not the second, not the third. In the fish that you catch first, look in its mouth.

[17:38] So the hook is baited and down it goes into the lake. Perhaps several fish were looking at it, considering biting. But the one with the coin in his belly was the first to bite.

Why? Well, you say he's hungry. He didn't have any nourishment from that coin. He ate a coin and it didn't nourish him. He's still hungry, so he's going for the bait. Whatever.

God was sovereignly controlling that he, her, whatever, was the first to bite that hook. Somebody had to lose a four drachma coin.

Wonder who that was. Wonder how that came about. How long had that coin been in the lake, lost, before this fish had swallowed it? How long had it been inside the fish?

All of this, you see, had to be controlled by the sovereignty of God, by Jesus knowing all these things and bringing it to pass. Where Peter decided to go fishing that day?

[18:40] Right over the spot where this fish was. Or if the fish was way off and he went to his usual spot, God brought the fish. In one way or another, there was this sovereign meeting.

And in all of this, we see the deity of Jesus. Jesus, he is God. He speaks and things happen. And amazing things have to fall into place to see it happen.

And yes, he controls every single one of those things. From the coin falling out of the fisherman's pocket, if they had pockets. To this fish swallowing it.

To being the first one to bite on Peter's line that day. It says of our Lord in that hymn, he speaks. And listening to his voice, new life.

The dead receive. Isn't that something? He speaks the gospel with such power that new life goes with it in those who believe.

[19:37] The broken, mournful hearts rejoice. The humble poor believe. So, what are some applications of this doctrine? If we see the fact that Jesus is God, therefore, when he speaks, indeed, whenever God speaks, whether it's the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit, what they say always happens just as they say it.

Well, what should our response be to such a Savior with such powerful words? Well, first, just to obey his word. Wouldn't you say that's a fitting response?

If this Savior speaks in that way, that we ought to jump when he speaks. We ought to, with Peter, say, because you say so, I will.

Well, all my reasoning might be, there's no reason to go fishing, Lord. But because you say so, I will. So, whenever we find a word from God, whatever our reasons for lingering back and going a different way, we ought to step on him and say, but because you say so, I will.

Well, because I know that when you speak, it happens. Peter could have said, I never caught a fish with money in its mouth before, much less the exact amount to pay my taxes.

[21:06] Nevertheless, because you say so, I will go fishing, just as he did the earlier time. You'd seen already by now that Jesus knew more about fishing than he did, the professional fisherman.

And so, because you say so, I will. You remember one other time, after the resurrection, Peter went fishing again. And a man appeared on the shore and called out, friends, have you caught any?

No. Put out your nets on the other side of the boat. How much distance is there in a lake between this side of the boat and that side of the boat?

But they do. And again, a multitude of fish in their nets. Immediately, they say, it is the Lord. Well, they'd seen this kind of thing happen before.

When Jesus speaks, fish jump into the net. Fish bite the hook. And so, there is this motive to obedience.

[22:11] This is the one who speaks to us in his word. Then, every time he speaks, let me obey. Let me argue with all my reasons to not obey. But because you say so, I will.

You remember there was another time that Jesus told Peter to come to him on the water. Well, there was the word from Jesus. Jesus, come to me on the water. And Peter might have said, I've never walked on water before.

All my life, I've worked on the water as a fisherman. But every time I've stepped into it, it's never held me up. I've always gone down. But somewhere in whatever he was thinking, he said, but Jesus, the Son of God, has just called me to come to him on the water.

Because you say so, I'm coming. And he got down out of the boat. And he stepped on the water. And lo and behold, it held him up. And he walked to Jesus. He took him at his word.

He obeyed him. Come, he says to Peter. And Peter goes. And that must be the response of our hearts to such a Savior. It's only then as he was nearing the Savior that he looked away at the waves and grew fearful and began to sink and cried, Lord, help me.

[23:35] And Jesus snatched him up and said to him, O you of little faith. Have you thought if Peter walking on the water was a man of little faith, what were the cowards back in the boat?

Who never stepped out and walked on the water? No, they weren't called. But the point is, Peter got out of the boat and walked.

Didn't he? And yet, even his faith was so little. And so, we need faith to believe that. So, this year, as you're reading the Bible and you see words of God, words to believe, words to obey, remember who's speaking them.

And give to this sovereign Lord the honor and the glory that's deserving of such a one by obeying because you say so.

But the second application is to trust. It's trust and obey. O you of little faith. Yes, he had a little faith and he put it in his Lord. And that's what's required as we come to God's word and as we read these words.

[24:56] We need faith. We need to trust him enough to obey him. The faith, that's what Jesus praised in that Gentile centurion, wasn't it?

When he says, Lord, you don't have to come to my house. I don't deserve to have you come into my home. Just speak the word. And my servant, way back there, will be healed. And Jesus commended that he had not seen such great faith in all of Israel.

Here's a Gentile. And I haven't seen such faith among the Israelites who had the Bible. But I find it in this Gentile. It was his faith, you see, that took Jesus at his words.

That said, when you speak, there is a power in your voice that controls things that happen all over the place. In the same way that I, as a man in authority, speak to a servant and he comes.

When you speak, the disease must go. Good health must come to my servant. It's faith. So, if this Gentile centurion had such faith, we see our need for faith whenever Jesus speaks in his word.

[26:06] There were childlike faith. This is none other than the Son of God. And I can take him at his word. It was the same for the Apostle Paul.

We don't have time to turn to it. But in Acts 27, remember, he's on the boat. He's heading to Rome to stand on trial. God had told him before, you must give testimony and witness before Caesar.

And so now he's on the boat and he's going to Rome. And they're in the midst of this storm. And everybody's down in the mouth. Nobody's been eaten. And they've been throwing everything overboard.

And finally, Paul says, keep your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. He's in the same boat and the same mess.

But he's got something they don't have. He's got a word from God. And God said, you're going to give testimony in Rome. So take courage, men. All of you with me in this boat. We're going to make it because God spoke and said so.

[27:10] So eat up. We're going to be there. Remember Abraham. Remember Abraham. He was promised a son from which the promised Savior would come one day. And he was made this promise.

And his wife only got older and still was barren. Yet Romans 4 and verse 21 says, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.

Persuaded. That's faith. It's the persuasion of the things that we've not seen being right according to what God's word says. Believing it will happen just as he has said.

That he has power to do all that he's promised. And that power will attend that promise until it is accomplished. Then I do want us to think, to turn to more, Matthew 4.

It's in this same gospel that we find this fishing trip about Peter and the coin.

[28 : 15] Matthew 4 and the first four verses. Then Jesus was led by the Spirit. Right after his baptism, he was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.

That was the Spirit's purpose for taking him into the desert. There to be tempted by the devil. After fasting 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.

And Jesus answered, It is written, Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. Every word that comes from the mouth of God.

So what's the temptation here? The temptation is that Jesus is being tempted by the devil to not believe that his father will take care of him.

He hasn't eaten for 40 days. He's hungry. But will he believe that the father will take care of him?

And Satan says, You can't trust him. You need to take your powers in hand.

[29 : 24] And as the Son of God, prove that you are the Son of God and change these stones into bread. But as Matthew 4 says, verse 4 shows us, he does trust God.

He does trust God. All my God has to do, all my father has to do is speak a word and I will live.

Because man doesn't live on bread alone. What we really live on is God's decreed word.

Whatever comes out of his mouth will happen. I don't live on bread alone, but on every word that comes out of the mouth of God. If he doesn't decree life for me, I can have all the food in the world and I'll still die.

People do that, you know. They have plenty of food and they die. But though I'm in a desert and without food, if he speaks, if he decrees a word from his mouth, I will live.

I don't need the ordinary bread that men need in order to live. God will see to it that I have my needs met one way or another.

[30 : 32] But what is real is that my God speaks and I live. That's what keeps me alive, not some bread. And I'll trust him for it. Now, hold your place here and turn back quickly to Deuteronomy 8.

Because that's the passage that Jesus quotes from. Jesus says, It is written, Man does not live by bread alone. Well, where did he get that word? Well, it was from Deuteronomy chapter 8.

Our Lord hid the word of God in his heart that he might not sin against him. And he knew this passage of scripture in Deuteronomy 8. And he remembered the similar tests that the people of Israel were going through.

The background here is that God's son Israel. Remember, he refers to Israel as his son, his firstborn son. Israel is now in the desert without food being tested.

They were being tested during the whole 40 years. And so, isn't it interesting that we, in Matthew 4, have God's son, Jesus, being tested 40 days in the wilderness.

[31 : 37] There's a parallel here. They're in the desert on purpose by God to humble and test them to see if they will trust him and obey him.

Notice Deuteronomy 8. Be careful to follow every command I'm giving you today so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land that the Lord promised on oath to your forefathers.

Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these 40 years to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.

He humbled you, causing you to hunger, and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

So what was the lesson that God took the children of Israel out into the desert and then withheld the ordinary bread from them? There was no food. Why did he do that?

[32 : 45] In order that he might feed them by his word from heaven and cause manna to come down to the earth and feed them. Extraordinary, beyond the normal way of taking care of them.

Will they trust me? Will they obey me? Will they believe that it's not the ordinary bread of life around them that they need to keep them alive, but it's every word that goes from my mouth?

Well, how did they do? Remember when God sent them manna and he told them, you don't need to go out on the Sabbath because there won't be any. Some of them went out and they didn't find any. That was unbelief, wasn't it? And then he said, don't save any until the next day because it'll be there every day.

And some of them didn't have faith to trust God. Yeah, we had it yesterday on Tuesday, but we don't know whether we'll get it tomorrow on Wednesday. So they took some extra and stored it in their jars.

[33:51] In the morning there were maggots. They didn't trust God, did they? They didn't believe that we don't live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God, they must learn to trust him and take him at his word.

And that's the passage that Jesus quotes in the desert. What's the temptation? The temptation is to not trust God, to think that he's got to take life into his own hands. If I'm going to have enough, then I've got to provide for myself, and it's all up to me.

And where's faith in God's words of promise and God's word of decree? No wonder the Lord Jesus chose this verse to quote to Satan in the temptation in the desert.

It was a similar trial. On purpose by the Spirit of God, led him into the desert to be tempted by the devil. Will he trust God or take matters into his own hands?

And you can believe that you are being put and led by the Holy Spirit into situations in life where God is causing you to hunger.

[35:01] He's causing you to be shut off from the ordinary provision of things. And the test is this. Will you think that I've got to fix this problem?

I've got to take the matter into my own. That's all I have in life is just me and my strength. Or will you trust that I live by every word that comes forth from the mouth of my God?

If he ordains for me to live, I will live. And if he ordains for me to die, I will die. And I'll live by faith.

And I'll take him at his word. Even as the Lord Jesus did.

I will not worry. He commanded me not to worry. There's enough here on my plate to cause me to worry. But because you say so, Lord, I will not worry.

I'll trust you. I'll trust you. And I will obey. I'll not try to cut corners on your commands in order to provide for myself and my family.

[36:01] I'll believe that your word is true and that you will meet the needs of your people. Our Lord is never out of resources to care for his own.

He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. He owns the fish in the seven seas. And he made them swim into Peter's nets and to bite Peter's hook.

And he can make birds serve meat to feed his prophets. And he's feeding his birds and keeping them alive. And how much more valuable are you, dear Christian, to him? So don't worry.

Trust. Trust and obey. There's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey. And there's no other way to honor him with the honor that's due him.

But when he speaks, we give him the honor of trusting and obeying. And, you know, there's a gospel in this passage as well. We see our Lord Jesus succeeding in the desert where Israel failed in the desert.

[36:58] And we have to take our place with Israel, don't we, and say, yeah, we haven't trusted and obeyed our God either. But is it not our salvation that our Savior, our Messiah, our representative, our mediator, the one who lived for us and acted in our place, that he perfectly defeated Satan and every temptation and trusted the Father, that his righteousness might be put to our account and give us a standing in heaven of being just before God?

Well, God and God alone has this power to create his own reality just by his words. So let's trust and obey him. And let me say we don't have time to go into it, but it is a heresy of the Word of Faith movement to say that we too as Christians have the power to speak and to create reality.

To say words and thereby those words bring to pass the things that we say. There are people that won't speak the word cancer because they think that the Word somehow carries a power to bring cancer upon their bodies.

There are people who think that if they speak a certain thing, it will happen. That's voodoo. That's superstition. It's not biblical Christianity. But I bring it up because this is the kind of power that is supposed to be supposedly taught that Christians have.

And we must violently reject that and say, no, this is one of the ways that our Lord Jesus is different from all of us. He is God. We are not. He speaks and it happens. We can't speak and have it happen.

[38:38] And so may the Lord help us to take him at his word rather than trusting in our own. We're dismissed. We're dismissed.