

Listen

"Listen" is the first word of the command the Father gave to the three apostles on the top of the mountain. The ability to hear is also the first ability that we are all given. The first interaction we have with the world that we are born into is through sound. It is the last of the senses to be shut down if a person undergoes anaesthesia, and the first to recover. Listening is the use of our ability to hear in an attentive and productive manner. Many hear, but few listen. What is the difference ?

Those who hear are those who accept the word that is spoken, and receive it and persevere with it to produce a crop. And if they put to practice what they have heard, they are like the wise man who built his house on the rock. Jesus did not just hear what the Father was saying to Him, but He listened to how the Father was saying it. Jesus said, "...but the Father who sent Me commanded Me what to say and HOW to say it."¹ (Capitalised for effect.)

You can hear the music, but to appreciate music, you have to listen to music. In the same way, we can hear the word, but until we listen, we cannot appreciate the tone of the voice that speaks the words. The tone of a person's voice is as integral to conveying the message as the words that are spoken.

As such, the command is not just, "Hear ye Him,"² but also, "Listen to Him."³ It is one thing to hear; it is another thing to listen. In listening we hear how the words are spoken, not just what was spoken. That is why the Lord said, "Therefore consider carefully how you listen,"⁴ which is a change from the KJV, "..how you hear."

Sometimes it does not hurt to go back to basics. To us was given the privilege of having the command restored, "Listen to Him." Now it is time for us to check how well we have learnt to listen, not just hear, but listen. In the NIV version, the Lord has made clear the difference between 'hear' and 'listen.' Those who hear His words and puts them to practice are like the wise men. Those who hear but do not practise are like the foolish men. We all know that. However, it is written: "...Mary who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what He said."⁵ And the Lord said to Martha, "Mary has chosen what is better..."⁶ Now what is the better thing? In this context, consider this: Did Martha not also hear that Jesus was speaking? Of course she did, for the house cannot be that large. Even if she was in the kitchen, she would have heard His voice. Martha heard Jesus speaking, but Mary listened. That is why Martha served at the tables again when they were feasting in honour of Lazarus, but Mary anointed Jesus to prepare Him for burial. They both heard Jesus speak, but Mary listened to how Jesus was speaking. And when the disciples rebuked her for wasting the perfume, you see the difference between those who heard and those who listened.

Likewise, it is not enough for us to recognise the voice of the Holy Spirit so that we can hear what He is saying to the churches, but we must also learn to listen to the Holy Spirit so that we know how He is speaking. Jesus only commanded that those who have ears to hear should hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to the churches. As such, to go the extra mile, we should learn to not only hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches, but to listen as well so that we can pick up on the tone of His voice.

As an example, the Lord can say, "I will bless you," but knowing the tone will tell you what He will bless you with and how He will bless you. The Lord can bless you with freedom, but woe to you if He blesses you with freedom as He blessed in Jeremiah 34.17.

So, though the command is to "Listen to Jesus," and we who have ears to hear only have to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches, let us go one extra mile and learn to listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. It is, as the Lord has commended, the better thing.

¹ John 12.49

² Matthew 17.5 KJV

³ Matthew 17.5; Mark 9.7; Luke 9.35

⁴ Luke 8.18

⁵ Luke 10.39

⁶ Luke 10.42

Hr. Ed, manager of the Holy Spirit's Workshop

Copyright Information:

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION [NIV]

All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2010 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

KING JAMES VERSION [KJV]

Scripture quotations marked "KJV™" are taken from the King James Version.