

*“Listen to Him”*

## **“Why we Should Listen to Jesus”, Part I**

*Matthew 17:1-9*

Sometimes we think ‘If only God would speak audibly’ then we would really know what it is He wants us to do. Implied in that request to hear God speak audibly is that we would most certainly obey God if he were to speak directly to us. And yet the truth is He already has spoken audibly in the past and we have the record in Scripture. So if God has spoken audibly in people’s hearing that it was recorded by eyewitnesses, should we not be willing to obey those words whether we heard them or not?

We somehow get the wrong impression that God was always speaking audibly to people in the Old Testament. Not really true. He probably spoke to Moses the most but that’s somewhat understandable because Moses was the first leader of Israel and everything was new. But Moses was commanded by God to write everything down so the people would have a record of what God spoke. We might think Abraham heard God speak a lot. Guess how many times God spoke to Abraham as recorded in Scripture? Seven times. Divide that by the 175 years he lived, which is 63,875 days. So 63,868 days Abraham didn’t hear God speak audibly. The Bible only records for us snapshots of times where God led or intervened in Israel’s history to advance His plan. When you stretch that over time God’s audible voice was a rare event indeed.

As history advances and the Old Testament develops, the audible voice of God becomes even more rare; an occasional experience only for a prophet. But then Jesus comes along and 3 times God speaks audibly in Jesus’ presence; twice to large crowds and once to Peter, James and John when Jesus appeared in His glorious form, the way He’ll look when He returns.

When God spoke audibly these three times He did it to affirm the identity of His Son Jesus. The first at the beginning of His ministry at His baptism by John to a large crowd, the 3<sup>rd</sup> just before the last week of His life to a large crowd but the second time just to Peter, James and John to whom God said,

*“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”*

When God spoke audibly in Jesus’ presence He said to His followers ‘Listen to Him!’ Why? Why should we listen to Jesus? We could spend 52 sermons answering that question alone, but we’re going to just use two for now, starting here in Matthew 17. Why did God tell Jesus’ disciples to ‘Listen to Him’?

The transfiguration came at a very specific moment in Jesus’ ministry. Matthew, Mark and Luke all record this event immediately after Peter confessed, when Jesus directly asked who did the disciples think He was, that Jesus was the Messiah. And as soon as Peter confessed that publicly, Jesus tells them publicly for the first time that He’s going to suffer, die and rise.

*Matt. 16:21 From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.*

Peter rebukes Jesus for His 'bad' theology but Jesus corrects Peter by assuring him that the cross is God's will and to follow Him all disciples must take up the cross. Then Jesus assures Peter,

*<sup>27</sup> For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.*

*<sup>28</sup> "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom"*

So then He takes the 3 on an unknown mountain where He gives them a glimpse of His return-to-earth-glory. Why does He do this and why does God command His followers at this time to listen to Him? We need to listen to Jesus because . . .

## **Jesus Alone is the Son of God** **(17:5a)**

While this might seem obvious to us, the disciples were just figuring this out. They only just said it out loud that Jesus was the Messiah, but then Jesus yes but I'm a have-to-die-first-then-rise-from-the-dead Messiah (if they actually read the Scriptures closely). This is not what they wanted to hear. They will all desert Jesus at the cross. So Jesus gives them a glimpse of His future return to assure them that 'Yes, you're right I am the Messiah, so don't forget this when I die and when I ascend to the Father and won't come back for awhile. The Kingdom and the rewards will come and here's a snapshot to keep in your wallet so you won't forget when things get a little rough and the world around you doubts Who I am.'

The majority of the world we live in today doesn't give much thought to Jesus. Mostly because He's not visibly present. So people say all kinds of things about people when they are not present then when they are. And so Jesus is a swear word to some, a never changing statue still on the cross to others, a failed religious leader or one of many religious options to others. So God spoke audibly in Jesus' presence to affirm to His loyal followers don't get discouraged in His absence. You made the right choice. Don't let the world dissuade you from knowing that Jesus alone is God's Son and will come back and establish His rule. Thus the glimpse of the future.

As God revealed who Jesus was, Jesus, the unique son of God revealed who God was since He was. . .

### ***The exact representation of God's character (vv.1-2; Heb. 1:1-4)***

There is an amazing parallel to Ex. 24 when God called Moses with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu to come into God's presence on Mt. Sinai and receive the Law. He received it after being there for 6 days in God's presence. Here we read after 6 days Jesus took these 3 on this mountain and revealed His glory. These 3 saw the glory of God at Jesus' glorification whereas Moses and the others saw the glory of God at the giving of the Law. So the glorification was to reveal that Jesus is divine and is the Son of God.

The author of Hebrews declares this at the beginning of his letter when he says,

*<sup>1:1</sup> In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. <sup>3</sup>The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.*

Peter, James and John are blinded and terrified by the glorification of Jesus as the people of Israel feared the glory of God on the mountain and on the face of Moses. This experience was to assure Peter and the others that in spite of the cross and in between His return, don't forget Jesus is the Son of God and will return in power. So then why do Moses and Elijah show up?

Peter wrongly wants to commemorate the event. He suggests making 3 shelters – probably booths like they make at the feast of Tabernacles to rejoice in God's eternal blessings.

But this is where God speaks and says 'This is my beloved Son, whom I love.' And Moses and Elijah disappear and the disciples hit the dirt in fear at the sound of God's voice. But God was correcting Peter and assuring him that there's only 1 Son of God. The best Moses and Elijah and any of us can do is . . .

### ***Point others to Jesus (vv.3-5)***

Moses represented the Law. Elijah represented the prophets. When Jesus appeared after His resurrection to the 2 disciples on the road to Emmaus, we read,

*Luke 24:27* And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Jesus is not one of many options. He's not on par with Mohammed, Buddha or any guru. He's the Son of God. God spoke when Jesus showed up. How much clearer could He be?? And our job is to point others to Jesus and say 'He's the Son of God, listen to Him.' We should point people to Jesus with our life and our words. This is how Paul summarized his purpose in 1 Cor. 11:1:

*Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.*

The audible voice of God said "*This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased . . .*"

Another reason we need to listen to Jesus is because . . .

### **Jesus Models for us How to Please God (17:5b)**

Why did God say He was well-pleased with Jesus? When a father says he is pleased with his child it's because the child has done well and listened to what his father told him. This is what pleased God about His Son;

### ***His obedience to the Father (Luke 2:52)***

At the end of the birth account of Jesus, Luke summarizes Jesus' youth by simply saying,

<sup>52</sup>*And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.*

It sounds strange to us that Jesus grew or progressed in favour with God but not when you think about it. God's plan was to send Jesus to earth where He developed as a human in every way and yet all along the way He never once sinned or disappointed His Father. He never stepped out of line to exalt Himself over God. So when God spoke of His pleasure in the Son at his baptism – which

signified for the first time publicly that he was the Messiah –God showed His pleasure in Jesus’ full obedience to have waited until the Father said ‘Now!’

And here at moment when the disciples finally understood and signified publicly that Jesus was the Messiah God exalts Jesus once more, again affirming His pleasure in Jesus’ continual obedience to wait on the Father’s plan. And at the cross when Jesus took our sin and had to experience separation from God for us, we understand how God was pleased by His Son’s obedience to His plan to save us.

Jesus Himself said a few times that he always obeyed His Father,

*John 8:29* *The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.”*

Jesus models for us that obedience to the Father pleases the Father. We need to listen to Jesus. Jesus also modelled that we must have . . .

### ***Faith in God’s Word (4:4; 16:21-28)***

Jesus corrected the disciples a few times saying that the Son had to suffer before He entered His glory, referring to Is. 53 specifically. Jesus Himself had just said in 16:21-28 that He must be handed over to religious authorities where He will be killed and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day rise again. Then He also said in v.27 that He will come back in His glory and reward each one of us who listen to Him; obeying His Word and living by faith in His promises. Jesus modelled faith for all of us. He believed the cross but He also believed in victory over death and in his own future reign. Since that hasn’t happened yet, he’s still modelling faith.

When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness He victoriously overcame the enemy by quoting and believing what Scripture said. He did this to please His Father. He did this so He would never sin. He did it to show us how to live a life pleasing to God because according to Heb. 4:15,

*<sup>15</sup>For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. <sup>16</sup>Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

*“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”*

A third reason we get from this statement by God why we should listen to Jesus is simply because . . .

### **God Commands us to Listen to Jesus (17:5c)**

And this isn’t the first time God commanded His people to listen to Jesus. Look at Deut. 18:15,

### ***In the Past (Deut. 18:15-19)***

*<sup>15</sup>The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him. <sup>16</sup>For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, “Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see*

*this great fire anymore, or we will die.”<sup>17</sup> The LORD said to me: “What they say is good.<sup>18</sup> I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him.<sup>19</sup> I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name.*

Moses spoke those words to the people of Israel. God essentially quoted that phrase ‘Listen to Him’. How much clearer could God have been than when He verbally and audibly quoted Deut. 18:15 and said ‘Here He is! This is the One! Listen to Him! Because if you don’t listen to Him there are eternal consequences. So God was affirming what he already said in the past. My Son, the Messiah is coming. Listen to Him.

And so when He came God spoke through angels at His birth, audibly at His baptism, visually through the miracles, audibly again at His transfiguration and a week before Jesus’ death in John 12 and then through, darkness, earthquake and resurrection. God was commanding people to listen to Jesus all

### ***During His ministry (Matt. 3:16-17; John 12:28-29)***

And has He stopped telling us to listen to Jesus? No.

***Everyday*** we are to listen to Jesus and His words. We’re going to see many times how Jesus called us to hear His voice. But here’s just one for now from Matt. 7:24-27,

*<sup>24</sup> “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. <sup>26</sup> But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. <sup>27</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”*

Jesus simply says there only foolish people and wise people. Wise people listen to Him by doing what He says. The fool, Jesus says, is the one who hears Jesus’ words but chooses not to listen and obey. The Hebrew word for listen [shema] means to hear with the intent of obeying.

James, Jesus’ step brother and initially a doubter of Jesus’ identity (read John 7) later believed Jesus’ words for himself and became a leader in the church. He would write in James 1:22-25,

*<sup>22</sup> Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. <sup>23</sup> Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror <sup>24</sup> and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. <sup>25</sup> But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it— not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.*

So James said the same thing as Jesus; listen to the Word with the intent to obey it. Listening without obedience is deceptive because we think that Bible reading alone or church involvement alone are adequate to save us or that even accumulation of knowledge is synonymous with pleasing God. Jesus was quite clear, listen to obey.

So where do we start? What have you read recently from God’s Word that you need to obey? Love an enemy, forgive a friend, pay a debt, show kindness to a needy person, meditate on the Word of God? Take something you read today or yesterday/recently and choose to obey that – today.

Maybe you struggle with worry or fear. Memorize a verse about trust and not being anxious, repeat it throughout the day, pray it back to God saying *“Lord, Jesus says not to be anxious about my needs but to seek first Your kingdom, Your purposes and rule here. Help me to do that and trust You while I wait on You.”*

Maybe you struggle with a specific sin. Choose a verse like Rom. 13:14 which says *‘Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.’* Praying that back to God as well to help you.

Or maybe you struggle with critical thoughts and words. Take a verse like Ps. 19:14, memorize it and pray it to God seeking to obey it;

*May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.*

*“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”*

Let’s make it our desire in 2018 to listen to Him, to do what Jesus says, because He alone is Lord and Saviour to whom everyone will give an account to one day; He fully pleased God through obedience and faith, so we should as well; and simply because He commands us to.

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