

HEAR YE HIM!

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SCRIPTURE: Acts 3:22-24

For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

Today we begin the third year of these HEAR YE HIM broadcasts, in which we have continually pointed to Jesus Christ as the one preeminently worthy to be heard. During the next fifty-two weeks we plan to base each sermon on some familiar text or saying from Jesus.

Why should we listen to Jesus? Because if we want to live, even in the narrow, temporal, physical sense, we must listen to the Author of all life. Jesus was God's agent or instrument of creation. It was he who made the world, and man, and all the uncounted universes which surround the one vast universe we know. He is the source and author and originator of all law -- and man must live by law if he is to survive even on this earth. He is designated by God, the Father, as one worthy to be heard, for on the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John marvelled at the brightness and glory of his person, and with their own eyes and ears attuned to the spiritual world, heard the voice of God declaring, "This is my beloved Son; hear ye him."

Jesus recognized and claimed his right to be spokesman for God, the Father. He said, "Whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me only, but him that sent me, even the Father." (Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48) Again he said, "He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me." (John 12:44) And still again: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak;" (John 12:48,49) and "He who honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father who hath sent him." (John 5:23)

We listen to Jesus because he is the one foretold and designated by Moses and many of the ancient prophets as the one who should be heard in all things. Peter referred to this ancient prophecy of Moses when he addressed the crowd after healing the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, quoting it thus: "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him ye shall hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people." This was the burden of the message of all the early apostles -- that in Jesus, and only in Jesus is to be found the message and the power of salvation -- that there is salvation in no other name -- that there is "none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) To some it may sound like harsh language to say "Accept Jesus; hear him, or die;" but there are only those two alternatives. If his is the only name whereby men may be saved, men must hear and accept him, or be lost. Any man who refuses or neglects to listen to the words of Jesus does so at his peril.

When Jesus began to speak the words of God to men, there were many who would not hear. Some were blinded and deafened by their riches, their worldly wealth. Some occupied positions of political or ecclesiastical preeminence, which would have been

endangered if they had listened to him; therefore they heard him not. After vainly appealing to a crowd of people one day, Jesus told the disciples that they fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, because "seeing, they see not, and hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand." There are none so blind as those who will not see, and none so deaf as those who deliberately refuse to hear.

Many other people refused to hear Jesus because he was not the kind of Messiah they expected, or the kind of spokesman for God they had anticipated. People have always refused to hear the word of the Lord when it did not come from expected or socially approved sources. A prophet is always without honor in his own country, and among his own kindred. Many refused to hear Jesus because he came from Nazareth -- a little country town -- instead of from Jerusalem, the big city and ecclesiastical capital of the nation. When he presumed to speak in the name of the Lord, others said "Is not this the carpenter's son?"

Are you perhaps failing to hear the words of Christ today because you are sure that they could not come from the man who speaks in Christ's name? Jesus lives. We do not depend alone upon his words spoken long ago and recorded in a book. God still speaks to men through the living Christ. And as God delegated to Christ the authority to speak in his name, so Christ delegated to the apostles authority to speak in the name of Christ. To the apostles Jesus said: "He who receiveth you, receiveth me; and he who receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me." (Matt. 10:40) A similar thought is quoted by Luke: (10:16) "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him who sent me." John's gospel phrases it this way: (John 13:20) "He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me."

He who would hear the words of Christ, therefore, must be prepared and willing to hear them even when they come from an unexpected source. Now, today, Jesus speaks through the voice of his modern prophets, apostles, and servants, to whom has been delegated authority to speak in his name. If they have been empowered to speak in his name, men are obligated to heed what they speak; for "he that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me." Men are not excused by asking, "Can any good come out of Nazareth?"

Jesus said of the Shepherd, "His sheep follow him, for they know his voice; And a stranger they will not follow ... for they know not the voice of strangers." My sheep know my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Men need to know Jesus before they try to hear his voice. A certain spiritual preparation is necessary before men can hear the words of Jesus as spoken by his contemporary apostles, prophets, and servants. As Peter, James, and John underwent a partial transfiguration on the Mount before they could fully see, hear, and know Jesus, so we need to be changed, transformed, transfigured, born again before we can truly hear the voice of Christ. We need to be eager, expectant, believing, receptive. We need to know Jesus as Peter, James, and John knew him on the Mount. Then we shall be willing and eager to receive the truth from his apostles, prophets, and servants. Failure to hear them today brings its condemnation, just as failure to hear Jesus and the apostles of old brought condemnation, for "every soul" that will not hear the words of Christ, "shall be destroyed from among the people."

Only those who prove their willingness to hear by hearing what has already been given can expect to receive more. "Take heed therefore how ye hear; for whosoever receiveth, to him shall be given; and whosoever receiveth not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." Jesus is still speaking to men by the mouth of his apostles, prophets, and servants, as well as by the voice of his Spirit. Open your ears, your mind, your heart, and HEAR YE HIM.