

HOW HEAR WE...?

Ben Wright

The Jews present at the first gospel sermon being preached asked a question of great importance, “How hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?” (Acts 2:8). They wanted to know how the apostles could be speaking in their languages. That a notable miracle had occurred was evident to them.

As we consider the question, “How hear we?”, we need to understand the importance of hearing in the New Testament. The word “hear” is found 130 times in the New Testament. “Hearing” is found 23 times and “heard” 242 times. Obviously, there is a premium placed on hearing in the word of God. Our faith is based on what we hear (Romans 10:17). If we want to have a saving faith, then we must have ears open to the word of God.

It is interesting that our Lord placed a great import on hearing. It was Jesus that said, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 11:15). Jesus wanted people to really listen to what was being said and to process it through the mind to comprehend the meaning of His words. Without proper hearing, there cannot be proper comprehension. Think of the words said to each of the congregations addressed in Revelation chapters two and three: “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” A definite premium is placed on good hearing in the New Testament.

Sadly, not all will hear the words of the gospel. Our Lord knew this would be the case when He sent the apostles out to preach. He commanded them that “..whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet” (Matthew 10:14). Hearing here carries the idea of acceptance of the words of the apostles. The importance of hearing in this passage is shown by the consequences attached to not hearing. Those that would not hear would find themselves in a situation less tolerable than those who were destroyed in Sodom and Gomorrah (Matthew 10:15). Again, a definite premium is placed on hearing the word of God.

It was the case at Stephen’s stoning that the ones to whom he was speaking are said to have “stopped their ears” (Acts 7:57). These people had heard the word being preached and closed their ears to hear no more of it. They would not accept the words spoken by Stephen and rejected themselves.

All of this was prophesied by Isaiah when he was inspired to write: “And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.” (6:9-10). If proper hearing would take place, the Jews could have understood God’s word in their minds, which would have resulted in conversion and spiritual healing. While we know that some did hear, the vast majority rejected the message and closed their ears to the truth.

There needs to be more like the Thessalonians when it comes to hearing and receiving God’s word. Paul commended them for the way they received the gospel. “For this cause also thank we

God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” (1 Thessalonians 2:13). These brethren heard God’s word and believed it to be what it claimed, the inspired word of God. This is a wonderful example of a proper hearing taking place.

Proper hearing must take place in order for one to be saved. It is the first step in the process of salvation. If there is no hearing, there can be no believing (Romans 10:17). If there is no belief, there is only damnation awaiting the individual (Mark 16:16). When one’s soul is in the balances, that should solidify in our minds the premium that is placed on hearing God’s word.

There are those today that refuse to hear the word of God. The masses of people walk through life oblivious to their spiritual state. They are content to live life selfishly and for the moment’s pleasure that sin has to offer. That this is true is seen in the growing number of what statisticians call “unchurched” people. This is a demographic that has increased steadily in this decade.

There are those that will hear the word but through filters. They filter God’s word through their denominational prejudices or the filter of their own conscience. Some have been taught denominational sinfulness and refuse to comprehend God’s word because of this filter. Every verse is filtered through their “grace only”, “faith only”, “once saved, always saved” or other doctrines that they have swallowed. Some allow their conscience to guide them in ways that are not found in scripture. For instance, some believe that if you are a good person then you will be saved. This is most definitely contradictory to scripture, but some have this filter in their minds and every passage that goes against it is not heard.

The filters need to be removed so proper hearing can take place. One needs to come to God’s word with open ears and an open mind. The Thessalonians were commended because they came to believe that what they heard was God’s word and they accepted it as such. Everything that is taken in through the ears needs to be filtered through the word of God, not man-made doctrines or consciences. If what is heard is contrary to God’s word it needs to be rejected. Sadly, too many are rejecting the truth in favor of what man says.

May we ever be a people that hear they way that Jesus wants us to hear. May we take off the denominational filters and accept the pure word of God. It is God’s only power to save mankind (Romans 1:16). How is your hearing?