

Wednesday, September 21, 2011 - How Well Do We Hear?

Last month marked the second anniversary of when the Christ Centered Lessons website was launched. In the period of time that the site has been active, there have been over 50,000 visitors from 137 countries. These countries include China, Iraq, Iran, and many of the former Soviet republics. There have been e-mails asking religious questions, e-mails asking for copies of lessons, and any number of other inquiries. There are those around the world that are looking for the Truth, desiring to have a closer relationship with God and yearning for the opportunity to spend eternity in heaven. Most times desire is not the issue. The issue transpires because we do not hear what the message is telling us.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus often concluded a lesson by crying out, "**He, who has ears to hear, let him hear!**" (**Matt. 11:15;13:9; 13:37-43**) In His letters to the churches of Asia, Christ's words conclude with a similar saying: "**He who has an ear. let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches**" (**Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22**).

What is the point of these sayings? It is similar to saying "What is being said is very important, so you had better pay attention and listen!" In **Mark 4:23-25**, Christ stated "**If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. Then He said to them, 'Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.'**" It illustrates that Jesus had a problem with his listeners that that often exists today. Many people simply don't hear or don't hear so as to understand. I am convinced that many today don't appreciate the importance of hearing well. It concerned Jesus, so I believe it is appropriate to ask, "How Well Do We Hear?"

The scriptures tell us there are three types of hearers:

1. The "Dull of Hearing"

1.1. Some of the Hebrew Christians were like this...

1.1.1. **Heb. 5:11 - of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.**

1.2. Note that when a person has this problem, it is hard for others to explain things to them!

1.3. The fault is not with the "subject" material, nor the "presenter", but with the "listener"!

1.4. Isaiah wrote of such people, and Jesus applied it to many in His day

1.4.1. **Matt 13:10-23 - READ**

1.4.2. People are this way because they are dull of heart!

1.4.3. This prevents them from:

1.4.3.1. Understanding God's truth

1.4.3.2. Turning from sin to God

1.4.3.3. And being healed (saved) by God!

1.5. Jesus dealt with these types of hearers; we need to do the same today.

2. Those with "Itching Ears"...

2.1. Paul describes these in **2 Tim. 4:3-4**

2.1.1. **For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.**

2.1.2. Such people listen only to that which is pleasing

2.1.3. So they don't like "sound doctrine" if it steps on their feet or how they choose to live their lives

- 2.2. **2 Tim. 4:2** tells us what kind of preaching to do - **Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching**
 - 2.2.1. Continuing to verse 5 - **But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry**
 - 2.2.2. They will find the teachers they want...but then they turn from the truth to fables
- 2.3. How often have you been told you hear what you want to hear?
- 2.4. Many today are often afflicted with this "hearing" problem!
- 3. Those who hear with a "Noble and Good Heart"...
 - 3.1.1. Jesus speaks of these in **Luke 8:15**, "**But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.**"
 - 3.2. The Bereans were listeners of this kind
 - 3.2.1. **Acts 17:11** - **These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so**
 - 3.2.2. They were "fair-minded" (NKJV), thus willing to give Paul a fair hearing
 - 3.2.3. It showed in how they "received" (or listened to) the word: "with all readiness"
 - 3.3. This is the kind of listener we all should be!

In marriages, in raising children, at work, etc., we know that it is very important to be good listeners. When it comes to God's Word, listening is not enough. We must be good hearers. What is the importance of being a good hearer?

- 1. Essential to being Blessed...
 - 1.1. For those willing to listen properly, there are wonderful things to learn
 - 1.1.1. **Matt. 13:16-17** - **But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not.**
 - 1.2. Many things which great people (David, Daniel, etc.) did not have the opportunity to learn, things pertaining to wonderful blessings that are now available in Christ! (**Eph. 1:3**)
 - 1.3. We miss out on these blessings if we do not carefully hear!
- 2. Essential to saving Faith...
 - 2.1. God has ordained that we be saved through faith in Christ
 - 2.1.1. **Rom. 1:16-17** - **For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith.**
 - 2.2. Such faith comes through proclaiming the gospel, often involving listening to a preacher
 - 2.2.1. **Rom. 10:14** - **How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?**
 - 2.2.2. **Verse 17** - **So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**
 - 2.3. One reason faith is often lacking is because people simply are not good hearers. They miss out on the evidence in God's Word, which produces faith!
 - 2.4. Hearing also comes through reading God's Word. This also produces faith.
 - 2.4.1. **John 20:30-31** - **And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.**
 - 2.5. Does your "hearing" hinder the development of your faith?

3. Essential to Bearing Fruit...
 - 3.1. In the parable of the sower, in **Luke 8:15**, the only kind of soil (heart) capable of bearing fruit was the one which listened properly
 - 3.2. That is because bearing fruit comes from "understanding" the grace of God!
 - 3.2.1. **Col. 1:3-6 - We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth**
 - 3.3. Note that the gospel was bearing fruit in the Colossians.
 - 3.3.1. When did it begin? We're told "since the day you heard and knew (understood, NAS) the grace of God in truth;"
 - 3.4. Only by hearing well can we "understand" god's grace, and be thus motivated to bear fruit to his glory!
4. Essential to preventing Apostasy...
 - 4.1. There is a real danger of drifting, by neglecting "so great a salvation"
 - 4.1.1. **Heb. 2:1-3 - Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him**
 - 4.2. The only solution is to "give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard"
 - 4.3. Poor hearing is often the first step to apostasy!

So how do we become better hearers so that we can be pleasing to God? I would suggest the following:

1. Hear with Faith...
 - 1.1. Hear with a willingness to accept and believe what is shown in God's Word
 - 1.1.1. Notice **Heb. 4:1-2 - Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.**
 - 1.2. Those who died in the wilderness did not listen with faith!
 - 1.3. If we don't listen "with faith," the same sort of thing will happen to us; i.e., fall short of our heavenly rest!
2. Hear with a Mind to Act...
 - 2.1. Are we like the people in Ezekiel's day?
 - 2.1.1. **Ez. 33:30-32 - As for you, son of man, the children of your people are talking about you beside the walls and in the doors of the houses; and they speak to one another, everyone saying to his brother, Please come and hear what the word is that comes from the LORD. So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain. Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them**
 - 2.2. They loved to hear him, but for the wrong reason
 - 2.3. Do we love to hear sermons because of how well the speaker presents them or because of the life changing message that is presented?
 - 2.4. Hearing must be accompanied by doing to be of any value.

2.4.1. **James 1:22-25 - But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does**

2.5. As important as good hearing may be, the blessedness comes only if we are doers as well as hearers!

How important, then, is hearing? When it comes to listening to God, very important!

Isa. 55:2-3 - Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you

It is essential for the good of our soul!

So, what does it mean to “hear” the Lord? In biblical phraseology, “hearing” is frequently the equivalent of “obeying.” In the Hebrew Old Testament, the term for obey is shama, which ultimately means to “hear.” The people of Israel, for instance, are told by the Lord, “. . . **if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be mine own possession. . .**” (Ex. 19:5). If one is not obeying, he simply is not listening to God.

Similarly, a common term for obey in the Greek New Testament is akouo, “to hear.” A associated form of this word is even more dramatic. It is hupakuo, literally, “to hear under.” The idea suggested is that of one who places himself “under” another (a teacher) and “hears” with a view to practicing what he is taught. Hence, Paul could speak of those who became “obedient” (from hupakuo) from the heart to that form of teaching (the gospel) to which we have been delivered (**Rom. 6:17**).

It is a fatal mistake to not “hear” the message of God’s Word (**Luke 10:16**).