

2 Peter 1 – Will You Hear My Voice?

THE Apostle Peter, knowing that his time of decease was near, wanted to leave with his readers a feeling of certainty about the Truth that he had espoused.

“This voice which came from heaven we heard”

He said he was an eyewitness of Christ’s majesty: “*For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount*” (2 Peter 1:17–18). He said “we” actually heard a voice from heaven and, effectively he said, “No-one can take that away from me or the other two apostles that were with me on the holy mount.” The Truth as far as Peter was concerned had very, very solid foundations.

But significantly in **Deuteronomy 18**, there is a prophecy concerning one coming into the world, greater than Moses and greater than Elijah, whom they would hear. “*I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him*” (v18–19). The Apostle Peter cited **Deuteronomy 18** and warned of the consequences of not listening attentively. He said, “*It shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people*” (Acts 3:23).

If you reacted to Jesus’ words in an unfavourable way, well then, you suffered the words of judgment. But there was a positive side as well. Jesus spoke to his fellow-countrymen the words of life: “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word [an allusion to **Deuteronomy 18**], and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life*” (John 5:24). The Lord was effectively saying to them, “You have a choice now, as to how you will respond. You can listen to what I am saying and act upon it, or you can walk away from it. There is a day coming in which all of you shall come out of the graves and hear my voice. And my voice will call you either to resurrection unto life or resurrection unto eternal damnation.” No-one could treat lightly the voice of the Son of God.

The clever words of Sennacherib

It is interesting to reflect that many voices today are clamouring for our attention, just as in Jesus’ day. The attractions of the world come in many different guises. They are very appealing and the same pressures, the same choices are before us. An illustration of this is to be found in **2 Kings 18** when Rabshakeh, Sennacherib’s ambassador, appealed to the residents of Jerusalem to surrender. He said to them, “Look, don’t listen to Hezekiah, don’t let him make you put your trust in this God of yours called Yahweh, saying, ‘Yahweh will deliver you’, because you’re not going to be delivered. I am making a promise to you today, which is as good as what you’ll ever get out of your religion.” Look at the way he presents the promises of King Sennacherib – it’s almost Biblical language. He says, “Make an agreement with me, surrender, and every one of you will sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree.” These are the words of Isaiah and of Micah.

That is an Old Testament illustration of presenting the appeal of the world – “Come over to us, come our way, and you can have everything you want now. Why do you want to waste your time putting trust in a god whom you can’t see, and devoting your life to a religion that just doesn’t fit into the society of today?” Isn’t that something we are confronted with daily? Aren’t we hearing those sorts of voices today, brothers and sisters? Aren’t we being confounded by many voices all clamouring in our ears, all promising great benefits if we throw in our lot with them? It cannot be assumed that we will always listen to the voice of the Son of God, for there are equally strong voices out there in the world which are promising great

benefits, just like Rab-shakeh. Fortunately, at least on this occasion, the children of Israel held their peace. They “*answered him not a word*” (v 36). It takes a fair bit of determination to sit still and hold your ground.

Try to put yourself in the position of the children of Israel. There they were under siege in the last city left standing. They were surrounded by 180,000 men - an army notorious for its brutality. They were being offered a way out of the city and to be taken to a land of plenty. Now wasn't that appealing? It takes a lot of spiritual courage to hold our ground in today's society and to say within ourselves and also to our brothers and sisters that what we have got in the Scriptures, and what we've got in ecclesial life and fellowship, is worth far more than anything that the world can offer. Sadly, some people don't see it that way; but the majority do and it is good to see that the majority are holding the faith and not giving in to the temptations of the world.

“My sheep hear my voice”

The difficulty we have is in allowing that voice to actually get through to us. “*The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.*” It can cut right through to the very marrow, to the very thoughts and intents of the heart, if we will allow it. But if we allow other voices to crowd out the message of the Scriptures, we are not going to feel the full impact and the power of the Word of God. Now it is not always easy to maintain that straight walk, to hold the faith, to maintain our ground in a world that has turned its back upon God. But for those who are prepared to stick to it, there *are* great blessings.

Jesus said, “*He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep*” (John 10:2, 3). Notice how the Lord puts it. He says he calleth his *own sheep*, and he knows them all by name. He's standing there at the door, calling each one; he knows each one personally; “*he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice*” (v 4). It's a two-way affair, isn't it? There's this close intimacy between the shepherd and his sheep. Speaking of us as the latter-day followers of Christ, the Lord also said, “*And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd*” (v 16). And, “*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out my hand*” (v 27).

Those words by the Master are extremely comforting. In the world there are so many attractions and so many voices clamouring for our attention; but here we have a shepherd who is personally calling each one of us and he knows the experiences we are going through. He knows the difficulties of life. He knows the sadness, the sorrows, the depression, the anxiety and the fears we experience. He knows also our joys and the times when we are exhilarated. He knows how happy we can be when we are doing the right thing. The Lord knows all of that. And don't you think a shepherd has always got his sheep in mind? Does a shepherd 'lounge around' in the sunshine reading a book and then suddenly think, “Where are the sheep?” Jesus is the “*Good Shepherd*”, and as a true shepherd will always be concerned about his sheep.

No great speeches given by kings and statesmen down through history could ever compare to the words that came out of the lips of the Son of God. We have recorded in **Matthew 5 to 7** perhaps the greatest speech that has ever been made in the whole realm of history. It is recorded that “**when he was set, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying ...**” No doubt for the next few hours they listened very carefully to the incredible words that came from the Son of God. They had never heard a man speak like this before in their life. No doubt his speech transformed the lives of many of them to the extent that when he concluded, “*the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*” He said, “Ye have heard that it was

said ... *But I say unto you.*” They had never heard that before. No wonder they were astonished. Everything that was spoken before paled into insignificance compared to that which came forth from the lips of the Son of God.

The book of Hebrews records, “*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds*” (**Hebrews 1:1, 2**). Concerning the coming Messiah the Psalmist said, “*Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever*” (**Psalm 45:2**). We have the occasion where the Master stood up in the synagogue at Nazareth. He took the scroll of Isaiah, and quoted words from it. He closed it; he gave it to the minister, and sat down. “*And the eyes of all ... were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears*” (**Luke 4:16–21**). As if to take up the words of **Psalm 45**, the record continues, “*And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.*” They couldn’t believe that a man could expound the Word of God like that!

Later, officers sent to arrest him came back empty-handed with the response, “*Never man spake like this man*” (**John 7:32, 45, 46**). We have a glimpse in the Scriptures as to what sort of speeches and talks the Master gave. What would it have been like to be there at the feet of the Master listening to him speak? Well, in a way, we *have* heard his words! Although we do not have the Lord Jesus Christ by our side, the record of his life and the power of his words are no less powerful today, because we have the Word of God here in front of us. But it does require our response! None of us can dismiss what we have heard!

“**I stand at the door and knock**”

We can make the mistake of hearing but not listening. At the end of their wilderness journeys Moses stood up in front of the people and effectively said, “I feel sorry for you, because you have seen a lot of things and you have heard a lot of things, but it hasn’t made an impact.” Isn’t that incredible! Year after year rolled by and they saw, heard and witnessed so many great things, yet it never really made an impression. We need to have an awareness of the Master in our life. We have to imagine that he is right alongside us saying, “Will you hear my voice? Listen to my voice; shut your ears to the alternative offers that are out there in the world.” If we are willing to do that, then we through God’s grace will gain the Kingdom.

We think of **Revelation 3** and the last words of the Master to the ecclesia in Laodicea. We are living in the last days just prior to the Master’s return. How will we respond to the voice that Peter heard on the holy mount? “*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock*”, Jesus said. He is doing that every day of our lives, standing at the door of our heart and knocking. “*If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne*” (**Revelation 3:20, 21**).

As we partake of the bread and the wine, let us take into our lives the life and teaching of our Master: “*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith*” unto us, the brothers and sisters of Christ in 2009.

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