

Whose Voice do we Follow?

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.” (John 10:1-5)

In Scripture, listening to someone’s voice is often equivalent to following what that person says as being authoritative. Adam got into trouble because he “listened to the voice” of Eve when she gave him the fruit (Gen 3:17). Moses was concerned that the people would not listen to his voice when he went to bring them out of Egypt (Exod 4:1). When Moses and Aaron appeared before Pharaoh, Pharaoh’s question was, “Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice...?” (Exod 5:2). Then when Israel crossed the sea, God told them, “If you will diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God...” then they would not be plagued with diseases that came on Egypt (Exod 15:26). The idea of hearing and listening to the voice of another is found all throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. To listen to the voice of another means we are following what they say. Of course, there is no more authoritative voice than God’s.

Everyone follows a “voice” of some kind. Everyone has a final point of reference for authority. We all listen to someone, whether it be just ourselves, another human authority, or God as revealed through His word. We’re not talking about a psychological “hearing voices in my head” issue. Rather, we are talking about the ultimate “voice” of authority that people follow. Whose voice do we follow, and do we truly know the voice of our Lord?

Christians follow the “voice” of Jesus because “they know His voice.” He is the final reference point of authority. No other voice can match His or carry His power. Christians understand that following after other “voices” is following after strangers and thieves who, if followed, will steal, kill, and destroy souls. Jesus came to give abundant life. He came with divine authority and purpose. He is the door to salvation; He is the good shepherd who gave His life for the sheep.

People will ask, as those in the text of John 10, “Why do you listen to Him?” Is He out of His mind? Is He demon-possessed? Neither. There are no more sober words than those expressed by Jesus. “I and the Father are one,” He claimed (vs. 30). The people understood what He was claiming, so they picked up stones to throw at Him. Why? “For blasphemy, and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God” (vs. 33).

Jesus’ authority is indeed divine, and the key to our acceptance of this is found in the text:

“For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father” (vv. 17-18).

Jesus references not only His death, but also His resurrection. Note, in this, His authority over both death and life. Ultimately, the resurrection is what seals the authority issue. If He hadn't risen, the discussion would be over. Yet He was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection (Rom 1:4). The resurrection shouts the truth loud and clear that Jesus is the divine Son and needs to be heard.

This coincides well with what the Hebrews writer said: “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.” (Heb 1:1-3)

We are the sheep who have gone astray (Isa 53:6). If we listen to the voice of others, we die in that condition. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, laid down His own life to redeem the sheep, and only by listening to Him can we properly enter through the door (again, Him) and find our safety.

Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:37). Whose voice is your final reference point of authority? To whom are you listening?

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