

Are You Listening?

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James 1:21–25 (NKJV) “Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. ²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ 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; ²⁴ for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. ²⁵ 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.”

The world around us is being shaken. At this current time, our world is experiencing a pandemic of the COVID-19 virus. It has created great turmoil in the daily routine of life. Public places are closed except for what is considered the most essential. The economy that was at an all time high just two months ago has plummeted. Jobs have been lost and people are fearful that they too may become a victim of this unseen enemy.

This crisis is just another reminder that we are living in the last days prior to Christ’s return. Jesus told us that these things would occur but not to be afraid or deceived: “*And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. ⁶ And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of sorrows. ⁹ “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. ¹⁰ And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ¹¹ Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. ¹² And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But he who endures to the end shall be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”*”¹ Jesus called these things the “beginning of sorrows”. The word for “sorrows” is literally “birth pangs”. Like the increasing frequency and intensity of labor pains prior to a child’s birth, so the travail of creation will continue to become more frequent and intense prior to the Lord’s return: “*For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.*”²

Some ask, “Is the Lord in the current pandemic?” Whether or not God initiated the pandemic is unknown. However, we can be assured that God is in the shaking. He is always in the shaking and He is always speaking in the shaking. The question is, “Are we listening?” Are we listening to what God is trying to tell us?

“*See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, ²⁶ whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, “Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.” ²⁷ Now this, ‘Yet once more,’ indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. ²⁹ For our God is a consuming fire.*”³ We must not refuse Him who speaks.

Are we hearing what the Lord is saying? Jesus often said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” What does God say to us in times of shaking? “*When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, ¹⁴ if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*”⁴

It is one thing to hear. It is another thing to listen. Are we listening to what we have heard? Do we embrace repentance or simply want relief? Do we want to return to God or back to our routine? Do we want God to be first

¹ Matthew 24:4–14 (NKJV)

² Romans 8:22 (NKJV)

³ Hebrews 12:25–29 (NKJV)

⁴ 2 Chronicles 7:13–14 (NKJV)

place or just a part of our life? (Matthew 6:24) How many times will we hit the snooze once relief comes? One day the alarm will sound the last time and it will be too late.

There is a difference between hearing and listening. Hearing is passive. Listening is active. Hearing is effortless. Listening is intentional. Hearing is accidental. Listening is focused. Hearing is involuntary. Listening is voluntary. Hearing is an unfocused perception of sound. Listening is focused attention to what is heard. It aims to process the meaning of what it heard and respond accordingly. We must hear and listen in order to obey.

It is not the hearers of the word who are blessed, but the doers of the word. Jesus said, *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ ²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’ ²⁴ Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: ²⁵ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: ²⁷ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”²⁵* The difference between the wise and the foolish is not hearing but obedience. If we hear but do not obey, then we are self-deceived.

Now is the time to act on what we have heard. Now is the time to humble ourselves. Now is the time to pray. Now is the time to seek God. Now is the time to turn from our wicked ways.

There is hope for those who will hear, listen, and obey. God has promised to hear from heaven. God has promised to forgive our sins. God has promised to heal our land. Jesus has promised to give us His peace, joy, and assurance of victory: *“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”⁶*

To the weary, Jesus has promised to give us His rest: *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”⁷* In these last days God has promised the outpouring of the Holy Spirit: *“And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸ And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹ I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. ²⁰ The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. ²¹ And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved.”⁸*

The world around us is being shaken. In the midst of it all, God is speaking. Do we hear Him? Are we listening? What is He saying? What is He saying to the church? It is not enough to hear what He is saying; we must act on what He has said. Finally, what is He saying to you today? Will you hear and obey?

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⁵ Matthew 7:21–27 (NKJV)

⁶ John 16:33 (NKJV)

⁷ Matthew 11:28–30 (NKJV)

⁸ Acts 2:17–21 (NKJV)