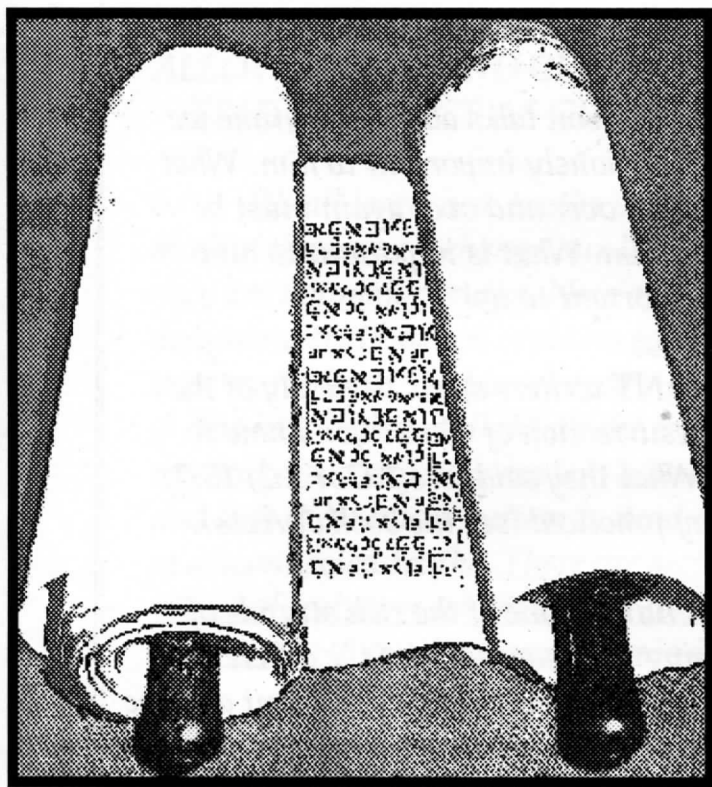


LISTENING TO GOD



AN APPROACH TO BIBLE STUDY

Part Six In A Series Of Seven

6. Rules That Really Help

LOOK FOR THE SUBJECTS WHICH ARE REPEATEDLY MENTIONED

1. In the last lesson we offered suggestions which should enable us to gain a better understanding of the Scriptures. There are several more in this lesson.

LOOK FOR THE RECURRING THEMES

2. What a person talks about everytime we meet him is obviously important to him. What God talks about over and over again must be important to him. What is important to him should be important to us!
3. When NT writers speak tirelessly of the death and resurrection of Christ you know it is crucial. What they said (see **1 Cor 2:2; 15:3**) is what they practiced (see the book of Acts).
4. **Covenant** is one of the rich strands of Bible teaching. To know some of the differences and likenesses between the **Old** covenant and the **New**, to know how the **Mosaic** covenant relates to the **Abrahamic** covenant and how they both relate to the **New** covenant in Christ would really open up the Bible for you. To have a clear idea of what a **covenant** meant in ancient times would unlock so many doors to understanding God's way with Man. (We hope to offer you a brief study on this later.)

THERE ARE SECTIONS OF SCRIPTURE WHICH DO THAT FOR US

5. Other major themes would include **Sin, Faith, Blessing, The People of God, the Law, Judgement, Salvation, the Sovereignty of God, the Gospel and Suffering.**

ALLOW BROAD AND CLEARLY TAUGHT TRUTHS TO ACT AS GUIDELINES

6. We all learn new truths every day but most of them don't change our lives because they are not major truths. Now and then we discover a truth which explains so much that was mysterious. That is an exciting experience. A line in a book may light up the whole book, a medical discovery may explain a host of facts and link them into a system instead of a mass of disconnected truths. There are sections and verses of scripture which do that for us and we need to watch out for them. Let me illustrate!
7. **Ezra 2:67** says 435 camels went with the people who returned to Israel in the days of Zerrubabel. That's true! But the fact that there were 435 camels (rather than 450) is of no great significance! It doesn't affect our view of God or Man, it doesn't help to explain the grand design of creation or help us to understand the Bible as a whole. Truths like this are

THE OT MUST BE READ IN THE
LIGHT OF MATTHEW 22:40

not to be denied or ignored but they are of minor importance for Bible study! Other truths have tremendous consequences for Bible study. Let me mention only a few!

8. A man asked Christ which was the greatest commandment in Scripture (**Matthew 22:34-40**). Christ told him what it was. He also told him what was second. Then he said (**22:40**): "All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." As a door hangs on hinges, Jesus taught, the entire OT teaching on human response to God hangs on two commands to love. That has profound consequences for OT study. What lies behind and under the many hundreds of rules and laws listed in the OT? **Matthew 22** tells us that the rules were the guidelines for lovers rather than simple legal requirements. The OT must be read in light of **Matthew 22**. (See also **Romans 13:8-10** in this connection.)

9. In **2 Peter 3:9** we hear that God doesn't want anyone to perish and in **Ezekiel 18:23** we're told God has no pleasure in sinful people dying in their sins—he would rather they turned to him and live! These verses have profound consequences. These and a host like them make it clear that God wants us to have

GOD DID NOT CREATE US JUST
TO TORTURE US

life with him rather than **death** without him. Any teaching, then, that says God has created countless millions for no other reason than to eternally torture them because that is what pleases him cannot be true! This is the way brutal tyrants behave. Those who have been subjected to such people need to know that God has nothing in common with such characters. This means that no obscure or difficult verse should be understood to teach that he has pleasure in creating us so he can torture us (in this life or the life to come). See also **John 3:16-17** in this context.

10. **Genesis 1:26-27** teaches that God made Man in his image. There is one God and he made all of us in his image. This truth has far-reaching consequences. No man is sub-human, no person (whatever the colour, creed, sex, culture, social status or ethnic roots) is to be dehumanised or treated unjustly. (See **James 3:9** and **Proverbs 14:21-22**.) This 'creation truth' should make us look at ourselves and our neighbour as something more than 'animals that walk upright'. This truth forbids us to prostitute ourselves or our fellow-man. This 'creation truth' allows for a healthy nationalism but it calls us to recognise a 'brotherhood of Man' behind all the different

EVERYTHING WILL BE WORKED
OUT IN JUSTICE

cultures, languages and races.

11. **2 Corinthians 5:10** tells us we will all appear before the judgement seat of Christ to give an account for our lives. This verse, and many like it, sets our minds at ease (to some degree) as we look at the injustice and oppression all around us. When we are tempted to think the powerful and brutal are untouchable, truths like these help us to wait for the final outcome. **Genesis 18:25** and **Matthew 11:22,24** both deal with God's judging process. With **2 Cor 5:10** they teach us not to worry about questions we can't answer just now. Everything will be worked out in justice. We can depend on God to do that.

12. **1 Peter 2:18-25** speaks to people who were suffering through no fault of their own and Peter comforts and challenges them with verses 21-25. The innocent Christ suffered and God used it to bring life to people. Christ's suffering means suffering doesn't need to produce despair. It also means God's love is not absent when suffering is present because God allowed Jesus to suffer even though he loved him beyond measure. Peter assures his readers that judgement is coming and all wrongs will be fully righted (**1 Peter 1:15-17** & compare **2 Peter 3:1-13**).

WE NEED TO KNOW BIBLICAL
HISTORY BECAUSE...

GET TO KNOW BIBLE HISTORY
REALLY WELL

13. What is true of biblical statements is true of biblical events! In our own lives we can see events that made a tremendous difference. We've read of or experienced some history that changed the world in radical ways. (The French Revolution, the rise of Islam, World Wars I and II, the rise to power of Gorbachev, are examples of what I mean.)

14. In your study pay special attention to the major events of biblical history. There are a large number of them (but not too many for you to become well acquainted with). Get to know the story of the events themselves! (Be able to tell the facts, the places, the names.) But look also for what the events mean, what the events teach.

15. We need to know the history: **1)** Because it often explains what Bible writers meant when they wrote; **2)** Because God revealed himself not in words only but in deeds; **3)** Because history shows the purpose of God developing; **4)** Because biblical history shows us our spiritual roots as part of mankind; **5)** Because history shows us both our failures and our possibilities under God.

EVALUATION SHEET

Name: _____

Listening To God LESSON 6

Tick The Box When You Have Read The Entire Lesson

List The Three Study Suggestions Given In This Lesson:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

In The Light of Biblical Truth, What Would You Say?

1. If someone claimed God made us just to torture us?

2. To prove that while all truths are important, some are more important than others?

3. If someone sadly claimed that the powerful and brutal people will go unpunished?

In The Light Of Gen 1:26-27 (See Paragraph 10)
List 3 Consequences Of God Creating Man:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Which Scripture Teaches?

1. Christ wasn't sent to condemn the world but to save the world: _____
2. Paul wanted to preach only Jesus Christ and him crucified: _____
3. God wants all to turn to him and be saved and wants none to perish: _____
4. The Judge of all the earth can be depended on to do what is right: _____
5. What God wants from us above all, is to love him and to love our neighbour: _____

Tick The Box When You have Read All The Verses
Mentioned In This Lesson

