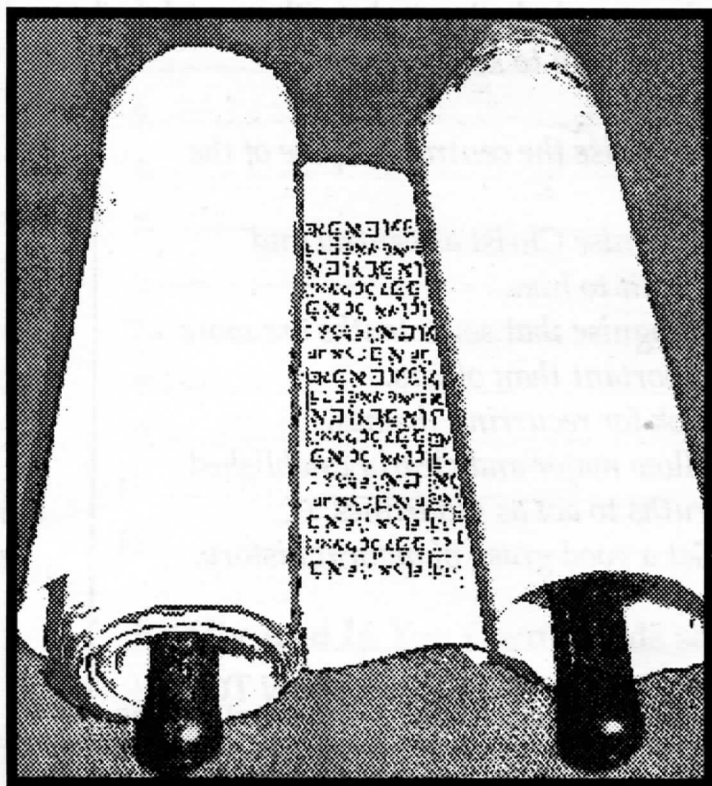


# LISTENING TO GOD



## AN APPROACH TO BIBLE STUDY

Part Seven In A Series Of Seven

*7. More Needed Rules*

## KNOW WHO IS BEING SPOKEN TO

### A BRIEF SUMMARY

1. *This course is about listening to the voice of God in Scripture. I've made some suggestions as to how we can more easily do that. I'll list them and then conclude the study with several more things we need to keep in mind.*

1. *Recognise the central purpose of the Bible.*
2. *Recognise Christ as central and submit to him.*
3. *Recognise that some truths are more important than others.*
4. *Look for recurring themes.*
5. *Allow major and clearly established truths to act as guidelines.*
6. *Get a good grasp of biblical history.*

## KNOW WHO IS BEING SPOKEN TO

2. *Common sense tells us we can't just open the Bible, read something and believe we must obey. If we opened at the OT book of **Leviticus** we would find a mass of rules concerning animal sacrifices. These laws were addressed to the ancient Jewish people and have no*

## ASK YOURSELF: DOES THIS TEXT APPLY TO ME IN MY SITUATION?

*immediate relevance to any other nation. Read **Leviticus** for yourself.*

3. *Be sure the text is addressing you or your situation before binding yourself to it. Before we justify an action of ours, we need to be sure we are given the authority to act in that way. (Jesus told a man to sell all he had and give the money to the poor—**Luke 18:22**. This would hardly justify a man depriving his wife and children of their home and necessities of life.) Before you require someone to submit to a text, be sure it relates to him. **Read Colossians 2:16-17 in this connection.** Ask yourself: Does this scripture apply to me or my peers in our circumstances?*

## KNOW WHO IS DOING THE SPEAKING

4. *The Bible faithfully records not only true teaching, it faithfully records lies and false teaching. Jesus is called a glutton and a drunkard in **Matthew 11:19**, but these are the words of his enemies and not the teaching of God. In **Job 9:17** (to choose only one verse from scores) a heartbroken man accuses God of being unfair. Job is wrong when he says this. We are not supposed to believe him! Job's friends 'defend' God but they often*

## IS HE SPEAKING GOD'S WORD OR EXPRESSING HIS OWN OPINION?

misrepresent him and God rebukes them for it (**Job 42:7**). In **Numbers 16:2-3** we hear that Moses took too much authority on himself, but a reading of the entire section shows this to be a false accusation and not God's word on the matter.

5. We need to ask ourselves: Is the speaker speaking God's word or is he expressing his own opinion or feelings? Are we reading the words of an authorised spokesman?

### RECOGNISE THE PROGRESS OF REVELATION IN THE BIBLE

6. **Hebrews 1:1-2** and **Galatians 3:24-25** tell us that the OT was preparation for the full and final revelation of God in the NT. That means there were things not revealed or only partly revealed in the OT. This is true even of the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ because **John 16:12-13** tells us they had more to learn which he could not tell them. Be sure to read **Ephesians 3:4-5** in connection with this.

7. 'Progress in revelation' does not mean from error to truth but from ignorance to knowledge or from some truth to more truth.

## SOME OT TRUTHS ARE SET ASIDE AS BELONGING TO A FORMER AGE

The OT covenantal law was truth! But much of it was truth for that phase of God's developing purpose. The ceremonies and sacrifices, the priesthood and ordinances were gently set aside as belonging to a former age when Jesus became Priest and King (**Hebrews 7:11-12** and **9:6-10**). Of course there were changeless truths taught in the OT and these we gratefully cherish and submit our lives to. Since the NT brings God's revelation to fullness, it must have the final word on what God wills. The NT will not set aside changeless truths taught in the OT but it will often dismiss some OT truth as no longer binding (see **Galatians 5:1-2**, for example).

### SIMPLY CULTURAL OR UNIVERSAL?

8. In many cultures the gracious expression of welcome is a kiss or kisses. Other cultures welcome people or greet friends with a handshake. The kiss, handshake or hug are all expressions of the warmth and courtesy felt and extended. In the mid-eastern culture of Paul's day they greeted one another with a kiss (see **Romans 16:16**). The kiss is cultural, the spirit of warmth is to be universal.

9. Luke says that they washed the feet of

WASHING FEET IS CULTURAL  
BEING HOSPITABLE IS UNIVERSAL

guests as a mark of welcome and hospitality. That is still common practice in many cultures but different cultures have their own ways of showing their hospitality and welcome. The washing of feet is cultural but the duty (and privilege) of being hospitable is a universal obligation.

10. The wearing of veils, anointing with oil, the tearing of garments, lifting up hands during prayer—these and many more biblical practices are part of the culture through which God revealed universally binding truths.

11. We need to seek the permanent and universal obligation expressed in the cultural behaviour. It will keep us from mistaking the principle behind the cultural clothing with the clothing itself. If something is bound on all nations and is age-lasting, that is an indication that it goes beyond mere culture (see **Matthew 28:19-20** as an illustration).

LOOK FOR THE OBVIOUS  
MEANING OF THE PASSAGE

12. Settle for what the passage looks like it is saying! The 'obvious' sense is the 'best sense' unless commonsense tells you it is nonsense.

BUT WE ARE NOT LEFT IN THE  
DARK BECAUSE..

13. Jesus called king Herod a fox. He called himself a door, a vine, a shepherd. He called himself bread and light and water. This is called figurative speech. But even when figures like these (metaphors) are used, there is a fitness to them. The message is clear. Herod was cunning, Jesus does sustain us (bread and water), he does deliver us from darkness (light). Even though we have figurative speech here, the meaning is still obvious.

14. But there are books in the Bible which are written mainly in images. It is called apocalyptic literature. The book of **Revelation** illustrates it well. It is a bit more difficult to be sure of the meaning of such books than it is of the narrative and prose sections of Scripture.

15. But we are not left completely in the dark. 1) Many of the images are borrowed from other parts of the Bible; 2) The writers tell us now and then just what they mean; 3) Some of the images are so familiar that their meaning is obvious. When we become well acquainted with the Bible we will have less trouble with this literature. Stay with the more obvious scriptures until then. **It is our prayer that God will richly bless your quest for truth as it is in Christ Jesus.** (If you think we can help further, please ask!)

# EVALUATION SHEET

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Listening To God LESSON 7

**Tick The Box When You Have Read The Entire Lesson**

### **List The 11 Study Suggestions Mentioned**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_
11. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Briefly And In You Own Words say Why?**

1. We need to know who is speaking (see paragraphs 4-5)

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2. We need to know something about the biblical culture to know the Scriptures (see paragraphs 8-11)

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3. We need to know who is being spoken to  
(see paragraphs 2-3)

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**Tick The Box When You've Read All The Verses  
Mentioned In This Lesson**

**Complete This Statement:**

(As found in the booklet)

1. We need to seek the permanent and universal \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Ask yourself: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. The NT will not set aside changeless truths \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Commonsense tells us we \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. That means there were things \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Through The Entire Study Which Scripture Has  
Startled Or Surprised You Most (and say why)**

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