



RESURRECTION CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES

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EVANGELIZING THE HEART OF THE BELIEVER

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Letters of Faith

**After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them,
and they follow him because they recognize his voice.**

**They won't follow a stranger; they will run from him
because they don't recognize his voice.**

John 10:4-5 NLT (emphasis added)

Dear Beloved,

We sense that Holy Spirit is emphasizing to the Body of Christ the importance of hearing *and recognizing* the voice of our Shepherd and Savior amid the cacophony of the myriad voices that are trumpeting the Devil's chorus so loudly all over the world today.

The above verses from Jesus' "shepherd and His sheep" allegory include a strong proclamation of His Messiahship and were devastating to those religious folks who heard it as they were stalking Him. *Was he actually proclaiming himself as the spiritual leader of God's people?* they wondered. *Was he actually dissing the existing established High Priesthood and claiming his voice was to be followed instead of theirs? Was he claiming to hear from Almighty God on high when they could not?* Yes, Jesus actually was. But they were so dull at hearing the voice of God, to say nothing of their inability to recognize that Jesus' voice actually *was* the voice of God, that Jesus had to proceed to explain His allegory to them.

Incidentally, some of the ordinary people in the crowd *did* understand and believe because they had seen His miracles, and they were not burdened down with thinking they had to know all the theological stuff that made these words so threatening to the priests! (ref. John 10:19-21)

The Pharisees had to believe they heard Jesus call them thieves and robbers when He said: **"...I assure you, I am the gate for the sheep," ..."All others who came before me were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them."** (John 10:7-8) Jesus wasn't attacking the establishment, He was establishing the foundation of the Kingdom: hearing and *recognizing* the voice of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, the living Son of the Most High God.

There were repeated experiences related in the New Testament of God speaking audibly from heaven and the people of God not recognizing His voice. Just remember, before you get too judgmental, that the Word of the Lord had not been heard in Israel for 400 years until John the Baptist came proclaiming the coming of Messiah. For example, when Jesus prayed: **"Father, glorify Your name.' Then a voice came out of heaven: 'I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.' So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, 'An angel has spoken to Him.'" (John 12:28-29 NASB)** Some of the crowd were spiritually awake enough to discern it was a

spiritual voice (angelic?) of some kind. Some just heard natural thunder. But although they all heard something, only Jesus *heard and recognized* the sound as being the voice of His Father in heaven.

Jesus then proceeded to explain to the crowd, and to His disciples who were with Him, that the sound was neither thunder nor angelic, but the divine voice of God that He wanted them to learn to recognize: **“...This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes.”** (John 12:30) Jesus was preparing His disciples, and all those who were daring to believe Him enough to still follow Him, to change their mindsets from the natural to the spiritual (like He did in John 6 where He preached the multitudes down to His twelve disciples). He was also escalating His confrontation with the Pharisees amongst them because He had to get them so disfunctionally-angry with Him that they would actually declare Him a criminal that they could get crucified, and not *just* a heretic that would be stoned to death (think of Stephen, Acts 7:54-60).

The apostle Paul’s eventful journey to Damascus has a similar example of hearing God’s voice but not recognizing it (ref. Acts 9:3-7 & 10). The men traveling with him saw the heavenly light flash around them and heard the “sound,” but only Paul **recognized the sound was a heavenly voice: “...Who art Thou, Lord?”** Paul recognized the voice was divine (“...Lord...”), but did not recognize the voice was that of Jesus until He said: **“...I am Jesus whom you are persecuting...”** Remember, Paul (Saul then) had not been a disciple of Jesus! Quite the opposite. He was a dedicated destroyer of that “heretical cult” and despised them for polluting his blessed religion.

Paul’s confrontation by Jesus on the road to Damascus engraved Jesus’ voice in his innermost being forever. From that traumatic moment until his death in Rome, Paul could never ever confuse any other voice with the voice of His Sovereign Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ of Nazareth!

Our Father God so very much wants us to be so equipped!

Paul is not the only scriptural example of the *recognition* of Jesus’ divine voice by His beloved ones. There is a most poignant story of Mary Magdalene going to the tomb of Jesus and encountering His resurrected presence in John 20:11-18. Please read it and meditate on it until you discover when exactly you knew that from that moment on you *recognize His voice* when He is talking to you.

At His tomb, Mary sensed someone was near to her, but she thought it was just one of the gardeners. She didn’t even recognize Him as the resurrected Lord when He asked her why she was crying. But when He said her name, *Mary*, she immediately knew it was Jesus, her Teacher, her Lord, her beloved Savior! She suddenly realized that He really was resurrected from the dead, and that meant He really was Messiah!

Jesus gave her a message for His disciples, but they didn’t believe her until He appeared to them in His resurrected body (ref. Mark 16:7-11). He appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, but when they returned with the startling news that they had been with Jesus and He was alive, the other disciples didn’t believe them either!

When Jesus did appear in the disciples’ midst, as soon as He spoke peace to them, He rebuked them for not believing the reports of His resurrection from Mary and the two others. Jesus rebuked His apostles for not believing the testimonies of

His other disciples! So we not only have to learn to recognize His voice when we hear it directly from Him, but we need to learn to recognize His voice when it comes to us through another disciple of His! We need to learn to accept the testimony of another disciple of Jesus who has heard and recognized His voice even when we haven't had a similar experience of Him.

I love the example of this that John and Peter provide us. After the crucifixion, Peter lead six other disciples fishing with him (John 21:1-3). **“At dawn the disciples saw Jesus standing on the beach, but they couldn't see who he was. He called out, ‘Friends, have you caught any fish?’ ‘No,’ they replied. Then he said, ‘Throw out your net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you'll get plenty of fish!’ So they did, and they couldn't draw in the net because there were so many fish in it. Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, ‘It is the Lord!’ When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his tunic (for he had stripped for work), jumped into the water, and swam ashore.”** (John 21:4-7)

Do you get it? Only John recognized Jesus' voice! Only John was so close to His beloved Lord, Jesus, that he recognized His voice over the sounds of the water, and the boat, and the exclamations of the other disciples over their huge catch. When he pointed out to Peter that this man on the beach was actually the resurrected Jesus, Peter threw on his tunic and jumped out of the boat, and (Haglin's interpretation) *ran* to shore. Peter believed that John recognized Jesus' voice even if he hadn't!

This is the time of each year we become especially cognizant of the climax of Jesus' earthly ministry: the cross and His resurrection from the grave. It is an excellent time to test our recognition of His voice, because there are a lot of alternative voices shouting at us. It is a special time to remember that no one is able to thwart God's plan which Jesus agreed to before He was sent to earth, the timing of which was settled in His session of agonized prayer with the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before His crucifixion. **“Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Thy name.”** (John 12:27-28a NASB, emphasis added)

Jesus knew that He had heard the voice of His Father: He was to be the supreme and final sacrifice that would end the reign of sin and death over humanity. He knew that His sacrificial death on the cross and glorious resurrection would grant eternal life for those who believed and entered into God's Kingdom now, and eternal damnation to those who refused to recognize the truth and continued to go their own way.

Now is a special time to make sure we also *recognize His voice* to us!

Resurrection Day hugs!

