

WHO LISTENS TO JESUS?

Jesus once asked this question, "If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?" Don't you think that is a good question? Why do people **not** believe the truth when they hear the truth? Jesus answered his own question this way, "**Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.**" (John 8:46-47 ESV) What does it mean to be "of God"? Who is it that believes Jesus?

Hello I am Larry Murdock. I preach for the Gandy church of Christ.

Jesus was standing before Pontus Pilate when Jesus said, "**For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.**" (John 18:37 ESV)

Being "of God" and being "of the truth" is the same thing. Whoever is "of God" hears the words of God; everyone who is "of the truth" listens to the voice of Jesus Christ and thus learns the truth from Jesus. Where do you find God's words or the voice of Jesus Christ? You find them both in written form in the pages of the New Testament of Jesus Christ.

The word "of" is a key word in these biblical expressions, "of God" and "of the truth." The English word "of" basically carries the idea of "from." People "of America" are people from America. The people "of Russia" are from Russia. The people "of India" are from India. The people "of China" are from China. The people "of God" are from God. But wait! Aren't we all "from God", the creator of all mankind? Yes. People of every nation are made in the image of God! However, not everyone created by God listens to God! That's right! So what does Jesus mean when He taught that "Whoever is **of God** hears the words of God"? Jesus had reference to only those people who want God! Those people who realize and acknowledge that God is their creator and Father. Being "of God" is to confess our dependence upon God! Being "of God" is to seek God. This is the interpretation that Jesus' apostle Paul made when he preached to pagan philosophers in Athens, Greece. Paul said, "The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he [God] made

from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, [so] **that they should seek God**, and perhaps **feel their way toward him and find him**. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring." (Acts 17:24-28 ESV)

The person who is "of God" is the person who is **seeking** God! He or she is the person who is **feeling their way** toward God. Jesus came in search of these seekers. His advice to us was, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." (Matthew 6:33) Furthermore, Jesus said, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened." (Matthew 7:7-8 ESV) There is **hope** for the one who is "of God."

One day Jesus was teaching a group of people who were educated in the Old Testament scriptures. They were very impressed by Jesus' teaching, but were puzzled and they asked, "How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?" So Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me." And then Jesus made this startling statement, "If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority." (John 7:15-17 ESV) The person who is "of God" is the person who "asks, seeks, and knocks", the one who desires to know God's will! Are you that person? Jesus' teaching came from God. It was and still is "the truth" that Jesus heard from God. Jesus responded to his enemies this way, "...You seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God." (John 8:40) It is just as Jesus told Pilate, "For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." Are you a person who wants to know God's truth? Are you listening to Jesus Christ? Are you reading and studying His book?

Jesus called people who want to know and do God's will his "sheep." One day Jesus told a crowd of people, "My sheep hear my voice." When a person is "of God" and "of the truth" he or she is one of Jesus' "sheep" who hears the Shepherd's voice and follows him. What I am doing by this radio message is to locate Jesus' "sheep," those people who desire to listen to the words of Christ.

Obedience is the mark of a true follower of the shepherd, Jesus Christ. Jesus was teaching one day when several of His hearers began to believe in Him. Of course, Jesus knew their hearts and their thinking. He saw that germ of faith in them. And so Jesus told those believers, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32 ESV) A student of Jesus is not saved yet from his sins! That's right! You see, Jesus' students (his sheep) must "abide" in Jesus' teaching. To "abide" is to continue in Jesus' teaching in order to come to understand the truth. The sheep must continue to follow the shepherd. And then something wonderful happens. The sheep begin to understand and obey the truth; the truth then will set them free! When Jesus spoke of "freedom" he meant freedom from sin. Jesus' hearers objected by saying, "we are Abraham's children, we are not slaves, so how is it that you say we shall be set free?" Jesus replied, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin." (John 8:34 ESV) Friends, the freedom that the sheep are looking for is freedom from sin! Forgiveness! This is the primary reason why we are following Jesus Christ! And so seeking and learning the truth of Jesus Christ is only the beginning. We must continue in the word of Christ long enough to learn what He did for our salvation and what WE must do to **receive** this great freedom from sin.

Jesus' apostle Paul talked about "obeying the truth". Paul predicted that God's wrath and fury would be against people who did not obey the truth. (Romans 2:8) Paul said that the reason he was made an apostle of Jesus Christ was "to bring about the **obedience** of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations." (Romans 1:5 ESV) Friends, the eternal God has commanded that the prophets write and the preachers preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to all the nations. And why; "to bring about the obedience of faith!" (Romans 16:25-27) God wants you! He wants to forgive you! He wants you to live forever! Why does God want this for you? Because God loves you as only God could!

Humans have known about the love of God for thousands of years! That's right! God made Himself known as "A God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, **but** who will by no means clear the guilty...." (Exodus 34:6-7 ESV) "Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who

love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, and repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them. He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face." (Deuteronomy 7:9-10 ESV) "What does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul...." (Deuteronomy 10:12 ESV) The psalmist sang this song "May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you! May those who love your salvation say evermore, "God is great!" But I am poor and needy; hasten to me, O God! You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay! (Psalms 70:4-5 ESV)

Friends, "God showed his love for us when he sent his only Son into the world to give us life." (1 John 4:9 CEV) "While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God." (Romans 5:6-9 ESV) Jesus' apostle Peter preached the first gospel sermon after the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. When asked by sinners what they needed to do, Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." (Acts 2:38-39 ESV) John, another apostle of Jesus Christ, wrote, "And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." (1 John 4:14-16 ESV)

Listen to Jesus Christ as He commanded His apostles, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:15-16 ESV) Friends, are you listening to Jesus? Do you want to obey Him? Visit a church of Christ near you and become obedient to Jesus Christ.