



"The truth which makes men free is for the most part the truth which men prefer not to hear."

—Herbert Sebastian Agar

08-Nov-13

## Listen Carefully (Part Two)

In Part One, we saw how important listening is in God's Word and therefore how vital it is for Christians to establish an attitude and habit of hearing. Of particular importance is our responsibility to listen to God's Son, [Jesus Christ](#), who was sent to reveal [the gospel](#) of the [Kingdom of God](#) to us. Christ's teaching in the Parable of the Sower also contains instruction about hearing:

"A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold." When He had said these things He cried, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" ([Luke 8:5-8](#))

His disciples asked Him what this parable meant, and Jesus obliged them by giving an explanation, saying that it had to do with the Kingdom of [God](#).

What we see in it are descriptions of four categories of people. In my experience in the church for nearly forty years, each one of these kinds of people have been and are currently in the church.

Those in the first group, those by the wayside from whom the Devil steals the Word from their hearts (verse 12), come to church for a very short period of time and never return. A man that my wife and I knew from our teenage years showed up one [Sabbath](#). We spoke to him, very excited to see someone from our past being called, yet he never came to another service. There are many more who never make it as far as to come to church.

Those in the second category are "the ones on the rock . . . who, when they hear, receive the word with [joy](#); and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away" ([Luke 8:13](#)). Some people attend church for quite a while before leaving and not returning. Because they have no root, they have no real commitment. For many of us, the Sabbath was our first test. If a person has no real commitment—no root, as Jesus puts it—he is probably not going give up his job to keep the Sabbath. Such a person ends up [falling away](#).

Those in the third category of people concern us the most: "Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity" ([Luke 8:14](#)). These people start out producing fruit, but somewhere on their journey to the Kingdom, they allow the worries, the riches, and the pleasures of life to distract them, and they stop producing fruit. In other words, their growth in Christ ceases. Later, we will see that they can be compared with the [Laodiceans](#).

Finally, the fourth group "are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with [patience](#)" ([Luke 8:15](#)). "Patience" is the Greek word *hupomone*, which suggests "endurance under extreme provocation." These people keep on following Christ and grow spiritually despite the trials life throws at them.

Just three verses later, Jesus advises: "Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him" ([Luke 8:18](#)). The *New*

*International Version* translates the first sentence as "Consider carefully how you listen." He then links how we listen with rewards and punishments.

The [letters to the seven churches](#) in Revelation 2 and 3, which are letters from Jesus to His disciples at the end time, also make this point. Notice that He says, "'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches," then He makes these promises of reward:

» I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. ([Revelation 2:7](#))

» I will give you the crown of life. . . . [And you] shall not be hurt by the [second death](#). ([Revelation 2:10-11](#))

» I will give some of the hidden manna to eat, and . . . a white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which no one knows except him who receives it. ([Revelation 2:17](#))

» To him I will give power over the nations—"He shall rule them with a rod of iron" . . . and I will give him the morning star. ([Revelation 2:26-28](#))

» He . . . shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father. ([Revelation 3:5](#))

» I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem. . . . And I will write on him My new name. ([Revelation 3:12](#))

» To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. ([Revelation 3:21](#))

This is the reward of those who have, which are those hearers in the fourth category of the parable. But what about those who do not have, who will have taken from them what they think they have? Let us compare the third group with the Laodiceans in [Revelation 3:14](#), 17-20:

These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: . . . Because you say, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing"—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and [repent](#). Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

Notice that Christ is on the outside, knocking, asking to be let back in. They have allowed their physical lives to become more important than Christ. They are no longer abiding in Him, and Christ says that without Him we can do nothing ([John 15:5](#)). This is why they cannot bring fruit to maturity. They are in terrible danger of losing everything, not just their physical things, but also eternal life and all the promised rewards.

Listening to God is no small issue. Let us take Christ's warning seriously to "consider carefully how you listen," and "Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown" ([Revelation 3:11](#))!

- Clyde Finklea

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## From the Archives: Featured Sermon

### [Parables of Matthew 13 \(Part 2\): Leaven](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

The Kingdom of God or of Heaven has past (Hebrews 11:13), present (Hebrews 12:22), and future (Hebrews 12:28) aspects. The Kingdom parables primarily provide instruction for the present aspect, a time when struggle and suffering are part of the mix (Matthew 11:12). The first parables of Matthew 13 reveal Satan's battle plan to: (1) attack in the early stages of development, (2) infiltrate with secret agents, (3) cause the church to grow large and worldly, exceeding God's prescribed limits, and (4) corrupt by false doctrine, destroying the relationships between the brethren. These parables describe the last quarter century in the church of God.

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[The World, the Church, and Laodiceanism](#)**

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The seventh and last of the attitudes within the church, Laodiceanism is the attitude that dominates the era of the end time. It seems more natural to think that this attitude would be the least likely to dominate in such terrible times—that it ought to be obvious that the return of Christ is near. But Christ prophesies that it will occur. In fact, it indicates the power of Babylon! Why does Babylon dominate the church in the end time? Because it dominates the world, and the Christian permits it to dominate him!

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