

*5 Water
Sounds
that Capture the*
**Voice
of
Jesus**

*What did Jesus really sound like?
Scripture shows several ways of understanding*

BY R.T. KENDALL

I am convinced that the devil does not want us to understand Revelation because one of the most significant things about it is that it was the first direct word from Jesus to His church for more than 60 years. Think about this for a moment. Jesus died on the cross and ascended into heaven around A.D. 29 and the church began. (Its early history is described in the Book of Acts.) Then around A.D. 50, inspired by the Holy Spirit, the first of the Gospels, recalling the events and teaching of our Lord, emerged, as did the writings of the apostle Paul, which dealt mostly with doctrine. However, after that time Jesus did not speak *directly* to the church. Perhaps some believers wondered if Jesus had forgotten them. Christianity began to lose momentum to the extent that around A.D. 90 there was an increase in apostasy.

It was around this time that John was banished to the remote, uninhabited island of Patmos for preaching the Word of God. While he was there, something happened to him. He says, “On the Lord’s Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet,” (Rev. 1:10). From that point on Jesus Himself speaks directly through John’s vision.

What Did Jesus Sound Like?

When we attach someone’s voice to a person, a particular image immediately comes to mind. If I referred to the voice of Caruso, for instance, you would immediately think of a tenor, perhaps the greatest tenor that ever lived. Or if I were to mention the voice of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the older generation would immediately think of the voice they used to hear on the radio, especially during the war.

Have you ever wondered what kind of voice Jesus had? Did He have a high voice, a low voice, or one that carried for miles so people could hear what He said? The only way of knowing what the voice of Jesus was like would be to get a description from someone who had heard Him speaking when He lived on earth. Yet if we expect to learn the answer to the question in this way, we will be disappointed, for the Gospels are silent about this, and John simply says that His voice was like “the sound of many waters,” (Rev. 1:15, KJV). This description of Jesus’ voice is most disappointing to someone who wants to know what Jesus really sounded like. But we have seen that John’s description of Jesus defies human understanding. We can only understand the person of Jesus at the level of the Holy Spirit.

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Yet why did John compare Jesus' voice to "the sound of many waters"? I think the answer is simple and obvious: water can produce many sounds, depending on external conditions; similarly, the voice of Jesus is heard in many ways, depending on the conditions that confront Him. Although you could doubtless think of more, I want to put before you five ways in which the varying sounds of water describe the voice of Jesus.

Water Sounds in the Voice of Jesus

First, let us think of the roar of a waterfall cascading from a great height—the voice of power and authority. The best-known sermon that Jesus ever preached we all know as the Sermon on the Mount. When He finished that sermon, the immediate reaction of all who heard it was this: "He taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law," (Matt. 7:28–29). In fact, the Bible tells us that the crowds who heard Him were "amazed at his teaching." We can well understand their surprise because, in making a series of statements, Jesus took issue with the popular tradition, and this is something that never fails to astonish.

It is interesting that many people admire the Sermon on the Mount at the level of their natural understanding and applaud Jesus for these teachings, particularly the last one. Loving one's enemies is a truly commendable ethic, they think. But they do not like the part about hell, and conveniently forget the Sermon on the Mount had more to say about hell than about heaven. However, if we are to see Jesus at the level of the Spirit we have to reckon with the whole of His word.

On another occasion it was said of Him, "No one ever spoke the way this man does," (John 7:46). Jesus had authority in His voice. It was with this authority that He went around healing people. Immediately after Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, a leper came to Him and, falling to His knees, said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean," (Matt. 8:2). The Bible tells us that "Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy," (v. 3). His words had authority.

A few days later the disciples took

Jesus out in their boat on the Sea of Galilee, and He fell asleep. Suddenly a fierce storm blew up and the sea became so rough that the waves threatened to swamp the boat. In panic, the disciples woke Jesus, crying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" Do you know what Jesus did? He rebuked the wind and the waves and at once there was a great calm. What authority! The disciples were overwhelmed. "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!" (Matt. 8:23–27).

Second, let us think of the sound of the water of a gentle, babbling brook—the voice of peace and forgiveness. Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest," (Matt. 11:28). Does this description fit you? Are you weary and burdened and yet you don't understand why you feel this way? You may say that you feel guilty, depressed or anxious. People often use these psychological terms to describe their feelings. Perhaps that is the best way you know to explain your unrest right now as you wonder what life is all about. Perhaps you are in deep trouble; you may be in a situation nobody else knows about, and you don't know the solution to your problems. Maybe your marriage is on the rocks, or you are in danger of losing your home, or your job, or your family. Listen: Jesus has a word for you, "Come to me, and I will give you rest."

In case you did not understand that, He put it a different way: "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me," (v. 29). This means that you recognize that your life is in turmoil and you need to submit yourself to Jesus' lordship and control. But receiving that help is not simply a matter of coming to Christ much as you would visit a doctor, who will, perhaps, give you a prescription to see you through a minor passing illness. Here, we are dealing with something far more serious. The root of your problem is sin; rebellion against your Creator by living in a way contrary to the way He ordained. The "yoke" Jesus speaks of is not to see you through "a bad patch"; it is for life.

Listen to the voice of peace and tranquility. Humble yourself; recognize the turmoil you are in and acknowledge the reason—your sinfulness. You are the kind of person Jesus had in mind when He

said, “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance,” (Luke 5:32). Jesus was the friend of sinners, and He meets you when, in a broken condition, you truly repent. “A broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise,” (Ps. 51:17). Come to God as you are and you will find rest and peace.

Third, let us imagine a deep, still lake. The waters are quiet, almost soundless—the voice of assurance. You will find this assurance simply by looking at Jesus, who died on the cross. Perhaps, until now, you have simply considered Jesus at the level of your natural understanding. You saw a good man and admired His teachings and lamented His violent death. Look to Jesus on that cross again and see what was really happening. It was not something you can see with the naked eye. Even had you been present at the crucifixion, you would have missed it.

You will only understand when you grasp God’s Word and an inner voice convinces you that God’s Word is true. When this happens, the Bible will suddenly come alive and set you on fire as you read, and you will hear Jesus speaking to you. He will reveal to you what really happened at the crucifixion. You will see that Jesus, who lived a sinless life, willingly took the blame for your sins and God punished Him instead of you. You will realize that you must stop competing with what Jesus did on the cross, trusting that your own good deeds will save you; you will understand that Jesus did everything for you. And when you turn to Him and accept Him as your Savior, you will hear His voice speaking words of assurance and know that you are His.

However, you need to understand that when you become a Christian, you receive Jesus not only as Savior but also as Lord. Jesus will rule your life from then on. As Lord He has the right to deal with your life in any way He pleases. If you do anything that brings reproach upon His name, He has a way of reminding you that you are His child, and He can be severe. You may remember He said to the church at Laodicea, “Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline,” (Rev. 3:19). As I said, this only happens to those who

are Christians. It is a sign of God’s love. So when you feel His chastening, you remember that it is further assurance that you are truly His own.

Fourth, think of a raging storm at sea—the voice of anger and displeasure, which those who reject Jesus will hear someday when He returns to be their judge. Jesus said, “A time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned,” (John 5:28–29).

Finally, consider the sound of relentless, pitiless rain—the voice of endless sorrow. Jesus referred to what follows the final judgment when He said, “Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’” (Matt. 7:22). This means that among their number will be preachers, ministers, vicars and bishops, Roman Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants. Along with many of their flock they may present Jesus with long lists of their good deeds, but these will count for nothing if they have not known Jesus as their Savior and Lord. They will hear a voice of wrath, a voice consigning them to the place of eternal punishment. Jesus said, “I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (v. 23). Then they will weep (Matt. 8:12; 25:30; Luke 13:28), but their tears will be too late.

Eternal Invitation

That final day has not yet dawned. Today Jesus’ voice, “the sound of many waters,” still pleads, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

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