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Can We Conclude from John 10 That Jesus Speaks to Us Today?

September 28, 2023



#STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about whether we can conclude from John 10 that Jesus speaks to us today, whether 1 Samuel 3 means we have to learn to hear God's voice, and how to respond to someone who says God communicated a message to him when he saw clouds cover the moon and then dissipate.

- * Can we conclude from John 10, where Jesus speaks about his sheep hearing and knowing his voice, that he speaks to us today?
- * What would you say to someone who uses 1 Samuel 3 to show that we have to learn to hear God's voice?
- * How should I respond to someone who says God communicated a message to him when he saw clouds cover the moon and then dissipate?

Transcript

This is Amy Hall and you're listening to the hashtag SDRask Podcast starring Greg Cockel. Don't use that word. Okay.

I knew you wouldn't like that. Okay. So Greg, in the last episode, we talked about someone making a decision about how to live based on having a piece about something.

Right, from Colossians. So today I have a few questions about hearing the voice of God, and this comes up every once in a while. But I thought I'd collect these three and we could talk about these particular questions.

The first one comes from Ryan. We have a show, a regular show coming up next week or something. Yes.

So next week at STR.org, the two episodes of the regular podcast will be your talk on decision making in the will of God. So I recommend, it's good we bring this up now, if

something comes up during the show where you think, wait, I don't understand this or you get upset or whatever it is, just know that next week you'll be able to hear on our regular show. It's a two-parter.

It's Wednesday and Friday. It's being alone without Amos. Just the good stuff.

And I recommend you listen to that. It is really good. I just re-listen to it and Greg is a lot more information in those talks than you'll get today in 20 minutes.

And plus it's controversial. And so I'll touch base answer these questions that we have here, but there probably going to be a lot more questions people have. And this longer teaching on it is going to fill in those spaces, I think.

And I'll mention, hopefully I won't forget, but I'll mention a few other things that people can look at on our website when we get to the end of this. Because surely people will have questions. All right.

This first one comes from Ryan Duffy. I've heard Greg Kockel talk about hearing God's voice. However, Jesus spoke about his sheep hearing and knowing his voice in John 10.

How are we to know his voice then unless he speaks to us now? And interestingly, and I tip my hat to Ryan that he answered the first question because my first question is where is that? Well, he identified a John 10. That's unusual. Most people do not know where this is at.

The second question is what's going on in John 10? And I have virtually never had anyone who offered this concern or this concept or this issue out of John 10 from Jesus comments explained to me what's going on in John 10. Now, I know the passage very intimately and you mentioned we were going to recommend some material. We have a series of talks.

Oh, no, I have a booklet, the ambassador guide to hearing God's voice. And I was taken from a series of solid grounds I did titled Does God Whisper. And so either probably are available on our website, but I do go into depth on John chapter 10 where Jesus makes this comment.

Let me just make an observation though, just based on the small portion that that Ryan made reference to. Can you read the question again, please Amy just so I can underscore something that was. Jesus spoke about his sheep hearing and knowing his voice.

How are we to know his voice then unless he speaks to us now? Okay. What he says there is my sheep hear my voice. He doesn't say my sheep will learn to hear my voice, might hear my voice if they have the right technique or the capability.

He says my sheep do hear my voice. All right. And this is why Henry Blackaby says, no, Blackaby's understanding of what that means is God giving messages to individual Christians that amount to directives for their lives.

He calls them their assignments. Okay. So what a person understands the phrase hearing God's voice to mean influences their application of the passage.

And that's the way Blackaby understands it. But he understands that it's descriptive. In other words, if you are God's sheep, you will hear his voice in the sense that Blackaby understands it.

But then and the question many Christians are going to say, well, I don't hear God's voice that way. And what is Blackaby's response? Well, then you're probably not God's sheep. Since it's an imperative, not an imperative, but a direct descriptive element of being a sheep that you do hear if hearing means what he says.

And you don't hear the way he says Blackaby, then, and many others, by the way, then you must not be one of God's sheep. Now, this is devastating for a lot of Christians. Okay.

The key here is what Jesus means by hearing his voice. And the best thing to do is start in chapter 10, verse one, and read all the way through to verse 42. Because there is a very particular thing going on there.

And incidentally, I'm just going to say this right now. John records a number of occasions leading up to chapter 10, where he talks about people hearing God's voice. He talks about it in chapter five, verse 25, chapter five, verse 37, chapter six, verse 45, chapter eight, verse 43, chapter eight, verse 47, and then one, two, three, four, times in chapter 10 here, and also chapter 18, verse 37.

So this is not like coming out of nowhere. There are all these other references to hearing God's voice. And when you read all those references and the context of John 10, you realize that something entirely different is going on here than what I suspect.

Ryan thinks is going on when he reads that passage. And incidentally, this is the verse that is brought up very consistently with people who take exception with my point about everybody doesn't get to have a conversational relationship with God in the way these proponents characterize it. Conversational meaning two way.

Yes, we pray to God. That's our conversation with him. But many writers say, well, we can't expect them to hear back from God.

Prayer is two way. We pray to God. God talks to us.

Conversation. New Testament, nowhere in the Bible is that ever taught. And in fact,

when Jesus teaches on prayer in the Sermon on the Mount, for example, he never suggests that we listen.

There is no listening prayer anywhere in the Bible. Hundreds of verses referring to prayer. None make that point.

But let's just stick with John 10. What's interesting here in verse four, it says when he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them. These are the sheep and the sheep follow him because they know his voice in a stranger.

They simply will not follow, but will flee from him because they do not know the voice of strangers for six next line. This figure of speech. Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were, which he had been saying to them.

Okay, listen. When he spoke, he began speaking in John 10, did the people to whom he was speaking here his voice? Of course they did. But he was speaking in a figure that they didn't understand.

Now, a figure or metaphor or something like that, allegory, those are all different types of figures of speech. They never mean themselves. A figure is not a figure of itself.

It's a figure of something else. So hearing Jesus' voice is a figure of speech that refers to something else. Okay.

And in this conversation, jump down to verse 16. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold. There he's probably referring to Gentiles as opposed to the Jews with whom he's speaking.

I must bring them also and they will hear my voice and they will become one flock with one shepherd. You know, what's interesting here is you read through this. There is no intimation that what Jesus is talking about is believers tuning in to the voice of Jesus that is some kind of communication device with your getting propositional information to apply to their life.

That's the way it's taken here as voice. But Jesus said, wait, this is a figure. That isn't what he's talking about.

And the people to whom he's talking about who he says in the context here, you don't hear my voice can hear his voice of that sort. Contentful information, propositional form, telling them particular things. There's something else he's referring to that's not happening.

Okay. Now I want you to look. I'm just going to jump ahead because we don't have time to execute the entire passage to the second time he encounters the Jews.

There are two encounters here where he uses this language. And then Jesus says, now,

verse 25, Jesus answered. Oh, the Jews says, like, tell us plainly, are you the Christ? Tell us plainly, are you the Christ Jesus answered them.

I told you. And you did not believe. So they heard his claim.

They didn't believe the works that I do in my father's name. These testify to me. But you do not believe because you are not my sheep.

My sheep hear my voice. Do you see the parallelism? You do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep hear my voice.

The parallelism is between the word believe in verse 26 and the phrase here, my voice in verse 27. And here's what he says to finish that line. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me and I give them.

Eternal life. Notice the sequence. They hear, they respond, they receive eternal life.

The Jews are not his sheep, so they don't hear in the sense that Jesus is talking about. So what does he mean by hear his voice? He is talking about the effective work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of some people to draw them to a state of belief in him because they are already his sheep that the Father has given to him. Now this is theological ramifications beyond what we're talking about and people can struggle with those ramifications all they want.

I'm just reading the words that are straightforward. Jesus is not talking about getting messages, Christians getting messages from him. He is talking in a figure of speech about non-Christians being adequately persuaded by the Holy Spirit to put their faith in Jesus.

And that's why they are called his sheep and the ones who are not his sheep, those Jews who are not believing him, they don't hear that voice of the Holy Spirit if you will voice in quotes right now because they are not his sheep. Now this is very straightforward. I give eternal life to them.

They will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand to continue verse 28. My Father who has given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.

So you have this picture, it's a divine claim here. The Father's working, the Son is working, the Spirit apparently is working, not though not mentioned, but the Father is given sheep to Jesus who have the capacity to hear the particular thing that creates belief in them so that they follow him and get eternal life. And then they are saved and secured by the Father and the Son out of both of whose hands can never be saved.

Be taken. So I mean, I'm just reading the verses and they're not complicated. There is no

implication here that anything more is going on with regards to Jesus' voice than the effective calling of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those that the Father has given to the Son.

That's it. Nothing more. It's a figure of speech identifying the work of the Holy Spirit.

And read the whole chapter. You'll see that's the case. I notice even in the question, it's somewhat question begging too because the question is not whether we hear from God.

The question is where is God speaking? All right, we have the Bible and that is the words of God. And we also recognize those words as being God. God's words.

And that is how God is speaking to us. And this is one of the points. I think it's not that we never hear from God.

We hear from God every time we open up this Bible. The Holy Spirit communicates things to us like comfort and conviction. Yes.

He testifies that we're children of God. There's all sorts of things the Bible says that the Holy Spirit does. But this is one thing I think people skip over.

And that is what does the Bible actually say about this topic? And that's what I really appreciate about your teaching is you actually go through all these passages and you look at how does God lead people? How does that happen? How is he involved in our decisions? And that's why the Spirit to do thus and so. That is not what Paul is talking about. All you have to do is read the context.

And you can see that he's talking about putting to death the deeds of the flesh or walking in the Spirit and fulfilling the demands of the law, depending which passage you're looking at. And by the way, the point I'm making here, I'm making an exegetical point. Okay, right now.

My sheep hear my voice. Jesus means something particular there. And whatever it is that he means, and I explained what he means in the context, still happens today.

They do hear his voice in the sense that he means it here. Okay, but that isn't the way most people are thinking about it in their mind when they just think of this phrase or this sentence. My sheep hear my voice.

They're thinking of it in the Henry Blackaby way, you know, or many others who, by the way, I respect. So I'm making an exegetical point here. I am not saying that God can never communicate to any individual in a special way outside of the Scriptures, because God, I convince God does that.

What I'm up against here is an evangelical received tradition that every believer has the right. And in fact, if they're spiritual enough and really have a good relationship with

God, to hear him specifically, giving them individual personalized messages. This is not taught in Scripture.

When God does intervene in the book of Acts to give special instruction, it is rare. And it is an intervention. It's not being sought.

And it's supernatural. You have angels showing up. You have Jesus showing up.

You have visions. You have, you know, Philip being spirited away. You know, he talks with the C. Theopian Union.

He's got soul travel, you know, his body disappears and he goes somewhere else. These are the kinds of characterizations that we see people referring to when they talk about, well, God told me this and God told me that and God told me the other thing. The other thing that I'm not denying is the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives to enlighten Scripture to us, to also convict us of sin in our life, to give us insight into things, to help us in the gifts that He's given us.

But these are things that you have to tune in to be able to learn to hear. Think of the way people often characterized it. Maybe these will be some of the other questions, but they say, well, God is trying to talk to you.

Wait, say that again. God is trying. Really.

God tries. Oh, He tried, but He failed. Is that the kind of God we worship? A God who does His best, gives it His best shot.

And if it works, it works. If it doesn't, well, bummer, it's up to us. No, God doesn't try.

He's not a wannabe. He's a bee. I think what's behind a lot of these questions when people are concerned is they're afraid of losing a relationship with God.

So they have it in their mind that it has to happen a certain way. So I'm really glad you brought up all those ways that God does communicate to us and that He indicates He communicates to us in His word. And this is why we have to go back there to find out what to expect and what not to expect.

And I think people just get it in their ideas that this is the only way that we can actually be close to God. And I, you know, learning to do these certain things to get messages. And so anyway, there's so much more to say, but I want to go on to the next one.

Okay. It's another passage. This one comes from C. Cooper.

What would you say to someone who uses 1 Samuel 3 to show we have to learn to hear God's voice? I would say started for Samuel 1 verse 1, read chapter 1, read chapter 2, and read chapter 3. Okay. Now I'm going to go to chapter 3 right now because it's

brought up. I know this passage very well.

And it's so interesting that someone would bring this up. Again, it's an example for Samuel 3. This is the call of Samuel, a little Samuel. Okay, a little Samuel's a little guy and he's the great prophet, obviously becomes a great prophet.

But in this case, he's just a little guy who's who's been dedicated by his mother there to the temple service. And he's an errand boy, essentially in a helper for the chief priest there, who is the father, Haphne and Phineas. Eli? Yeah, Eli.

Okay, Eli. So when we read through chapter 1, chapter 2 and chapter 3, what we find out, it's chapter 3 is the most important one because that gives the account. But what happens in chapter 1 and chapter 2 is we get background information.

Now here's the way for, first Samuel is characterized. By the way, can you read, is there a verse referenced there in chapter 3? It just is for Samuel 3. There's no verse. Well, okay.

So what we have here, this is the way the text is characterized by people who advanced the passage. And so I would, this is the question I would ask. It's a kind of what do you mean by that question.

Explain to me what you think you see in 1 Samuel chapter 3. That seems to support this idea. Well, what you have is an older, more godly Christian, who have a believer in this case, who has learned to hear the voice of God, who then instructs a younger believer in the means by which you can recognize the voice of God. Because in this case, Samuel hears God, but he doesn't recognize God.

And so Eli is the older mentor that helps him to recognize the voice of God. That's the narrative. Okay.

Here's the difficulty with the narrative. There's not a single item in that narrative that you can find in the text. First of all, Eli is not a godly man.

Okay. Eli is living under a curse. The only time he's ever heard from God is when a prophet comes to his house, knocks on his door and curses his face.

He's not a godly man and he isn't in the habit of hearing the voice of God only wants from a prophet. Okay. Secondly, it says in the text that Samuel, little Samuel, was not a believer.

lever. It says the right in the text. He did not know the Lord.

He's just a little kid, or a young man, or maybe 8, 10, 12, I don't know, but he doesn't know the Lord. So you have no believers here in this dynamic. And then when God speaks to Samuel, Samuel speaks, here's him right away.

He knows exactly what was said, but he doesn't know it's God because he's a kid who works for Eli, and he thinks Eli's calling him because he's the only person around. So he runs into Eli and Eli doesn't have any insight into what's going on. He sends him back.

This happens three times. And finally, Eli comes to his senses and says, okay, here's what you say. Speak Lord, your servant is listening.

And so then he speaks. He didn't teach him how to recognize the voice of God. It isn't like there's some, there's a phenomenology of God's voice.

So he doesn't sound like your buddies. He sounds like, you know, Charles Heston or something like that. There's no phenomenology there that's, he just says, oh, okay, this is what's going on.

And then after God speaks to Samuel, Eli says, tell me everything. This doesn't sound like a guy who's like on the inside, who knows what's going on. No, tell me everything.

And then it says at the end of the chapter, and I'll just read this last verse because this is important. It sums it up. Thus, Samuel grew and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fail or literally none fell to the ground.

In other words, everything that Samuel said was going to take place became true. What is that a test of a true prophet? This isn't just some believer who's learning from an older believer about how to, you know, recognize the voice of God. None of that is in there.

This is the inauguration of the great prophet of the Old Testament, Samuel, who is the one who anoints David as king and delivers the Davidic promise to David. All Israel from Dan, even to Bersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the Lord. This is unique.

This is special. This is not a standard by which we are to follow as evidence that we can all learn to do what Samuel did. I mean, I'm chugging an actual voice too.

It wasn't impressions. It wasn't anything like that. It was an actual voice, which is why he thought it was Eli.

Exactly. This is why I'm saying there is not a single part of the narrative that is used to describe what is going on here in support of the idea that we can all learn to hear the voice of God that actually fits the historical circumstances, not a single part. And if you don't believe me, like I said, read first Samuel.

You can read chapter three, but you can find some other things out by reading chapter one verse one and all the way through chapter three. Then you get the entire characterization of the account, and you'll see that nothing about it fits the narrative that often is used to describe what's happening there was Samuel. All right, Greg, we're over

time, but I'm going to throw this last question in there.

You can answer this briefly because it's coming from a little bit different direction. It's about how to respond to someone who is saying these things. And I know that that can be tricky, but this comes from World View Cafe.

The CEO said he saw full moon, then clouds formed and covered the moon. Clouds dissipated. He felt God speak, quote, I can turn nothing into something, something into nothing, turn this ministry into something.

And if it goes thick and blocks Jesus, it has to diminish. End quote. How do I respond to this? Seriously? How would you respond? How should he respond to this? I would ignore it.

Yeah. Think of all the things that were said. There's nothing that was said, that's at least wise controversial.

Plus, nothing is said. There is no instructions given. There's just the implication that if something obstructs Jesus, then God is not going to bless it.

But again, that's not even controversial. There is no directives that are given. So, it's not helpful to go after people every single time they say, the Lord told me this, that and the other thing.

Now, when the thing that allegedly is being heard, and keep in mind, that I'm convinced that God can speak and does speak in circumstances today, it's extremely rare and it isn't the birthright of every born-again Christian, which is the way this view is being characterized. It happened in the book of Acts. It happened in the Old Testament very rarely with very particular people under very special circumstances and almost never was anything like what people are describing God speaking to them so-called now today.

Nevertheless, that's possible. But notice that, I mean, I was raised in the Pentecostal as a Christian, Pentecostal environment. And I heard tongues and prophecies.

I have no conviction I ever heard the real McCoy. And people who are in those environments, they know what I'm talking about you, thus say it to the Lord. And then it's just a bunch of stuff that even if it were true, somewhat inconsequential, generally it's true statements about God.

I shall be praised. I will be worshipped by my people. Raise your hands.

Praise me. Praise me. And I will be glorified.

Okay. Thus say it to the Lord. Okay.

Well, you can't take exception with that. There's nothing controversial about it. Praise

the Lord.

However, a claim is being made that the individual is speaking for God. And to me, that is a different category. And when people make those claims that they are speaking for God or God or Jesus is speaking through them, this is, for example, what's your name? Sarah? What's your name in Jesus' calling? I have serious problems with that, especially the first book that was written and the introduction tells how she got all this information.

And of course, that's been removed because it's occultic. And I'm not putting her, I'm not saying, you know, I'm not making any judgments on her personally or her convictions. I'm saying that this stuff is dangerous.

And when people make the claim that they are speaking Jesus' words, that's a huge deal. And we ought to be very, very careful about that. Now, there was a, there was a, there was a pastor's wife in my community who wrote a letter from Jesus to a bunch of her friends or her, but women's Bible study or whatever.

And then so she read it. This is what Jesus said to me. And then she's speaking first person for Jesus.

Well, this wasn't Jesus. One of the lines was, you think you're excited about my second coming? I'm even more excited than you are. Anybody who reads the gospels know Jesus and talk like that.

Okay, first off, secondly, why should anyone believe? And this is the question that should have been asked. Why should we believe that what you just gave us came from Jesus? Well, because I really feel it, I really believe it. That's not a good enough reason.

It should have been ignored. But the reason nobody asked that question, as far as I know, people came to me with the letter, but nobody went back to her is because she was the pastor's wife. And so that gave her at least the feeling of authority.

When she had no authority to speak for Jesus, the pastor doesn't have any authority to speak for Jesus like that, unless he can demonstrate why people ought to believe that he has the authority to speak this way for Jesus. In Samuel's case, everything that he said came to pass. None of it fell to the ground.

Thus he was confirmed as a prophet of God. Okay. That's the guideline that God has given us in his word.

And those are the guidelines we should be using. So just to reiterate, you're not saying that God never speaks to someone. You're saying that it's not something we have to learn how to do.

It's not like a technique that we need to learn. That's right. When God speaks, we hear

him.

That's right. Every case in the scriptures, when God spoke, the person to whom God was speaking heard, even the donkey got it right. So that's one thing I'm saying that you don't got God doesn't try.

And this is not a skill you have to learn. The second thing I'm saying is that this is not the birthright of every Christian. And those who communicate that it is are just flat out wrong, I've gone through all of their verses.

And we do in the thing we the verses that are used as proof texts turn out to be much like the Samuel passage. When you read it in context, it doesn't make that point, period, end of issue. Now, can God do it every once? Absolutely.

We cannot teach whatever we want. If we're going to teach from the word, we have to teach what the word says and not something else. All right.

So if you have questions out there, does God whisper parts one, two, and three are on our website at str.org? Or you can go to our store and it's called the ambassador's guide to the voice of God. Or next week, just come to str.org and listen to our regular podcast. And we have two one hour segments on this whole topic.

And if you're really mad at me, you can do all three. Because honestly, sometimes it takes a little while and understand the resistance for the reasons that you expressed earlier, Amy, it takes a while for this all to sink in. And I've had people that first time through really mad at me.

Second time through, still really mad at me. Third time through, not so mad. Fourth time through, beginning to think about what the scripture actually said.

Fifth, there's sixth time to convince of what the scripture teaches regarding this issue. Well, thank you, Ryan and C. Cooper and World Review Cafe. We appreciate hearing from you.

Send us your question on str.org or through Twitter with the hashtag [str ask](https://twitter.com/str_ask). This is Amy Hall and Greg Cocal for Stand to Reason.