

John 8:47

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.

Analysis

He that is of God heareth God's words—Jesus establishes the fundamental test of spiritual life. "Is of God" (ὁ ὢν ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ/ho ōn ek tou Theou) indicates origin, source, belonging—those born of God, regenerated by the Spirit. "Heareth" (ἀκούει/akouei) means more than auditory reception; it implies understanding, receiving, obeying. Jesus's sheep "hear his voice" and "follow him" (10:27).

"God's words" (τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ Θεοῦ/ta rhēmata tou Theou) are the divine utterances, the spoken revelation, which Jesus embodies and proclaims. The present tense indicates habitual, continual hearing—a lifestyle of receptivity to divine truth. This echoes Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel," and Jesus's repeated refrain, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 11:15).

Ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. The logical particle "therefore" (διὰ τοῦτο/dia touto) draws the devastating conclusion. Their refusal to hear proves their origin: they are not from God but from "your father the devil" (v.44). Spiritual deafness indicates spiritual death. As Calvin wrote, "Unbelief is the root of all evil," and "those who do not believe show that they are not of God."

This verse destroys all neutrality. There are only two families: children of God who hear His voice, and children of the devil who reject it. Receptivity to God's Word is the litmus test of regeneration (1 John 4:6).

Historical Context

Jesus's audience claimed Abraham as father (v.39) and had never been enslaved to anyone (v.33)—absurd given Egyptian, Babylonian, and current Roman bondage. Their self-deception blinded them to their spiritual slavery. They possessed Scripture, temple, priesthood, yet remained deaf to God's voice when He spoke through His incarnate Son.

This fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy of judicial hardening (Isaiah 6:9-10, quoted in John 12:40): "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes and understand with their heart." God's revelation either softens or hardens, illuminates or blinds—never leaves people unchanged.

For John's late first-century audience, facing expulsion from synagogues (9:22, 12:42), this verse provided theological clarity: those who rejected Jesus proved they were never truly God's people. True Israel—those "of God"—recognized the Good Shepherd's voice. External religious heritage meant nothing without spiritual regeneration.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How do we test ourselves to ensure we're truly 'hearing' God's Word with understanding and obedience, not just intellectual assent?
2. What does this verse teach about the relationship between regeneration and receptivity to Scripture?

3. How should Jesus's stark division (of God/not of God) affect our evangelism and expectations in ministry?

Interlinear Text

ὁ ὧν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ θεοῦ ἀκούετε
G3588 **He that is** G5607 **of** G1537 G3588 **God** G2316 G3588 **words** G4487 G3588 **God** G2316 **hear** G191

διὰ τοῦτο ὑμεῖς οὐκ ἀκούετε ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ
G1223 **therefore** G5124 **ye** G5210 **not** G3756 **hear** G191 **because** G3754 **of** G1537 G3588 **God** G2316 **not** G3756

ἐστε
ye are
G2075

Additional Cross-References

2 John 1:9 (References God): Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

John 18:37 (Parallel theme): Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

1 John 3:10 (References God): In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

John 8:37 (Word): I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

John 8:45 (Parallel theme): And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.