

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA. 55:10 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Those who have followed my studies in regard to Acts 28:28 will know that it is my conviction that the subject of the momentous declaration made in that passage is "the salvation-bringing message of God." (See Issues No. **SB005**, **SB008**, and **SB011**). The statement which is made concerning "the salvation-bringing message of God" is that it has been authorized (i.e. made freely available) to the nations, and to this was added the positive promise that "they will hear it." This does not mean that they would sit quietly and listen while someone spoke it into their ears. This promise declares that it will get through to them, or it will be made freely available to them, whether they listen to it or not. It is my further conviction that the production of a written testimony by the Apostle John was God's first step in the fulfillment of His promise, "**they will hear it.**"

From the day of Pentecost onward, and for the 33 years that followed, "the salvation-bringing message of God" was always freely available to the people of Israel, as Peter declared in Acts 10:36 and Paul declared in Acts 13:26. The use of the word **apostello** in these two passages should not be stultified or ignored. And in the Acts period the proclaiming of the salvation-bringing message was done solely by divinely commissioned men. These were God's heralds, and no one could hear without a herald and no one could herald except he be a commissioned one (*apostello*), as Paul declared in Rom. 10:14, 15. (See Issue No. 148). In the Acts period, Paul was the only man fully commissioned to speak God's salvation-bringing message to the Gentiles (Rom. 11: 13). This is a positive truth of great importance that should not be negated by the fact that God did commission Peter to go to one Gentile household (Acts 10).

All this was changed by the facts announced by Paul in Acts 28:28, that the salvation-bringing message of God was now freely available to every nation. And yet this fact would have come to a standstill then and there unless God does something to make it available. Heretofore, this message had always been spoken by divine inspiration, and the Spirit of God shaped and suited it to the exact needs of those before who the herald stood. The message was not written; it was spoken. So, the

question we now need to answer is, "What did God do to make the salvation-bringing message available to the people of the nations?"

He could have at this point raised up an army of men, gifted each one to make him an equivalent of Paul, put the message upon their hearts and their lips and sent them forth as His heralds to every nation in the known world at that time. But He did not do this. He simply caused His Spirit to lay hold of one man, John, a man first mentioned in Matt. 10:2 as one of the twelve specially chosen deputies of the Lord Jesus. He was commissioned to go to **"the lost sheep of the house of Israel,"** and herald a one sentence, six-word message (seven in English), **"The kingdom of heaven is at hand,"** and to confirm it to all hearers by the performing of four prodigious miracles one of which was the raising of the dead. This commission had long ago been fulfilled and had lapsed, even as all commissions do when they are completed.

Along with ten others John received a new commission which made him a certified and accredited witness to the Lord, in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, even the uttermost parts of the earth, but this was limited to Israelites in these places. If not, then Paul's claim of being "God's commissioned one to the nations" (Rom. 11: 13) is nothing more than an empty boast that discredits his whole ministry. This second commission he also fulfilled with honor, but it came to an end with Paul's pronouncement.

Now he receives a new commission - not to go forth as a herald and perform miracles - to write and thus produce a written testimony that would epitomize and set forth God's salvation-bringing message. His witness will be the first time the message was put down in writing. Thus John's Gospel becomes a written, living oracle, speaking forth the record God has given of His Son, a record apart from which no one can qualify as a believer and no one can be saved.

As one reads the Gospel of John and comes near to its end he comes upon an explicit declaration as to the purpose the Spirit of God had in mind when He inspired this message. This declaration which comes to us through the pen of John needs to be fully accepted and believed just the same as any other part. As a prerequisite to discussing or teaching the Gospel of John the expositor should give assurance that he accepts without question. this statement as to the purpose of the writer and will be guided by it in the interpretation of this book. This is the divine declaration:

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name. John 20:30, 31.

Those who believe, as I do, that God is the actual author of this book, and that John wrote only as he was moved by the Spirit of God, will find in this declaration the

purpose that God had in mind when He commissioned John to write. There was no intention of composing a full biography of the Lord Jesus, and it is a mistake to look for it in this message. It was the purpose of the Spirit of God to record certain facts concerning Him and to select from His life certain words that He said and certain works that He did, cause these to be written by John **with the end in view that this written record will be used by the Spirit of God to produce within men the belief that the man Jesus is in reality the Christ, the Son of God.**

Faith in the word of God requires us to believe that the things recorded here are the means which the Spirit of God will effectively use to produce a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, even one who possesses life through His name. And while some have seen fit to criticize this selection of material charging that it is both inadequate and insufficient to produce a believer, we hold that God knew what He was doing, and He declared concerning His work that the things recorded "have been written and are on record in order that you may be believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," as Kenneth Wuest has seen fit to amplify the passage.

A statement such as the one found in John 20:30, 31 is not found in connection with any other book in the Bible. This book among the entire sixty-six stands alone and supreme in this matter. It is an act of faith upon our part, an act of taking God at His word and responding accordingly, when we recognize and believe that the truth recorded in John's Gospel is the means that God will use in bringing men to be believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the lifetime of an individual there is no one thing that he or she can do that is as important in the sight of God as to have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. To say of a man that He is an active believer in the Lord Jesus is the greatest thing that can be said concerning him.

It is my personal conviction that the one fact that gives me standing in the sight of God is the fact that I became and that I remain one who believes in Him. It was well over sixty years ago that God moved in relationship to my life to make Himself a part of it. Today I am very glad that I did not resist His gracious effort, and that I am now related to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is through Him that I am now believing in God (1 Peter 1:21).

The relationship which I now have with God is the result of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. And the two great foundation stones of all that I now believe are the facts that He is the Christ and that He is the Son of God. **"Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ"** (1 Cor. 3:11).

As I now look back upon those days when God first put an urge within me to seek after Him, and I was becoming involved in a world of nervous religious activities which were occupying my time and attention, yet always seeking for something solid to believe that would bring me the assurance that I actually qualified as a believer, I now know that I could have avoided many tortuous roads if I had concentrated on the revelation concerning Jesus Christ which is epitomized in John's Gospel.

It is my conviction that my supreme duty in my service unto God is the presentation of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This demands that I shall ever be telling Who He is and what He is in God's sight. In so doing it is ever my hope that I shall see men and women, boys and girls, becoming God-produced believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. From long experience and observation I have found that I can best present the Lord Jesus Christ and declare the record God has given of His Son by using the material found in John's Gospel. In so doing I am convinced that I am working in harmony with the declaration of God when He said: **"These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."**

It is also my conviction that **John's Gospel is "the salvation-bringing message of God."** It is the record God has given of His Son, the basic message that will, as used by the Spirit of God, produce a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are those who claim that there is a gospel set forth in Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians that is superior to the message set forth in the book of John. They ignore the fact that these three letters were addressed to those who were already believers in the Lord Jesus, and they were not intended to be the divine means of producing such, as John's writing is declared to be.

I hold John's Gospel to be the most important book in the Bible. I believe it was written first of the four Gospels, and that Matthew, Mark, and Luke were commissioned to write in order to provide background material.

End Issue No. SB179

