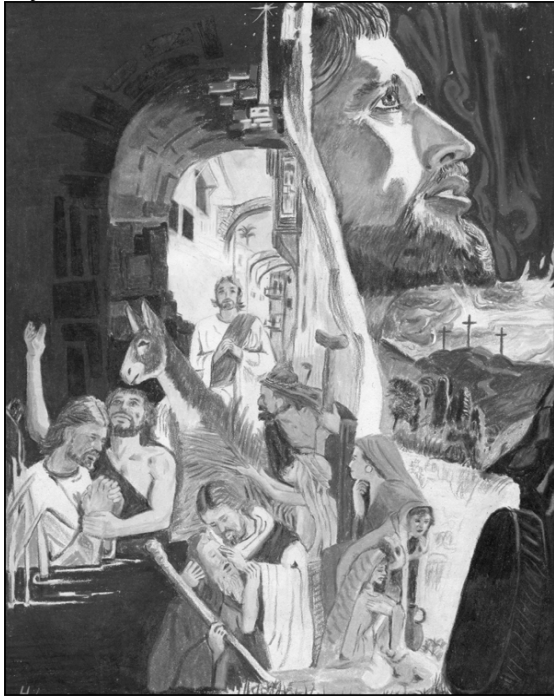


THE WORD – Part III

Gifts



Our drawing for these last two months is titled, ‘The Many Faces of Christ.’ In our study of the word of God we have been looking at the nature of Jesus. The entire world revolves around Christ, the Word. Whether mankind acknowledges this fact or not, will never change the outcome that the word of God has foretold for the world and mankind. Likewise, whether we believe that Jesus is the Word or not, will not change His character or nature. For many who do not know Jesus this may seem like an arrogant or somewhat outlandish statement. But think about it for a minute from a natural viewpoint. Jesus came as the Jewish Messiah, started Christianity and claimed to

be Abraham’s vision and the fulfillment of Abraham’s hope, which is what many Arabs and Muslims look for (See Matthew 1:1-17; John 8:39-59). This surpasses Muhammad’s claims even before Muhammad was born. If we view Muhammad as Islam’s Moses, then Jesus fulfilled the desire of three of the world’s major religions, before two of them were born. When we study history we discover that the Magi who brought the Christ child gifts were the patriarchs, if you will, of Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. Their founder, Zoroaster, predicted that event and his followers’ worship of Jesus (see the Mission Outreach link). What is it about Jesus that causes so much controversy some 2000 years after His death?

The answer is summed up in His character and nature, which is summed up in the word of God. There are so many paths that we could take to look at the character and nature of Jesus, but absolutely no one in history has ever claimed to be God and man simultaneously and then willingly gave up His life as a sacrifice to purchase mankind’s redemption. The seal or proof of Jesus’ approval from God Almighty was Christ’s glorious gifts of miracles, signs and wonders while He was alive; His resurrection (which was one outflow of His glory) and the abiding of the Holy Spirit upon His followers (which is an outflow of His resurrection). Gifts are for giving and Jesus gave His all so that we might have everything that the word of God promises mankind can have. It is the very fact that miracles and healings and other signs are so

prevalent among Jesus’ followers today that draws many a thirsty soul to the cross of Christ to find rest and healing. Christians bearing the gifts of Christ are like bushes that burn but are not consumed. What was it that God used to get Moses’ attention on the back side of the desert? It was a bush that burned but was not consumed. Once God gets his attention, He has a conversation with Moses. Moses changes his mind about going in the direction he is traveling and decides to go God’s way. As a result the course of his life was altered as was the lives of millions of people. God’s gifts and signs and wonders accompanied this change in Moses’ life.

Christ’s shed blood paid for our redemption but His body was, quite literally, broken for our healing. We say it every time a congregation takes communion together. But I always found the story of the banqueting feast to be just as relevant in this area. In Luke 14 Jesus tells a story as He is in the house of a prominent Pharisee. The experts in the law are watching Him carefully to see whether or not he will heal someone on the Sabbath. Jesus does. During the discourse that follows Jesus gives us an idea of who God considers worthy---the humble, the poor in spirit and those who give to people that have no hope of ever being paid back. Jesus tells us that those people will be repaid in the resurrection of the righteous. This elicits a response from one of the guests dining with Jesus of joy and longing for the feast in God’s kingdom. At this point Jesus tells a story about a great banquet in which a man invites his friends to

a dinner he has prepared. Each one bows out of the invitation. The man's servant returns telling him that no one is able to come. The ruler then invites the street people, the lame, the blind and the poor. The symbolism for us today is powerful. Not everyone that you would expect wants to be with Jesus in His kingdom and at His feast in heaven, but if you are humble, poor in spirit or financially, sick in body or soul and in need of healing, Jesus has a gift of a banquet supper waiting for you---not only in the resurrection but now as well.

The chapter goes on with Jesus talking about the price of discipleship. The meaning may or may not have been lost on the Pharisees and other prominent people listening to Jesus. It certainly was not lost on the poor and sick among the multitudes who flocked to hear His every word and pressed in among Him to be healed (Luke 14:25). There is only one place in the entire Old Testament that our English word disciple is translated as such. It's in Isaiah 8:16.

Chapter 8 talks about Immanuel, God with us and sets up chapter 9 where we read these words concerning Christ: "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end." Isaiah makes it clear that not everyone that calls themselves by God's name Israel, will make it into this

kingdom. God tells Isaiah, "Bind up the testimony and seal up the law among my disciples." The Hebrew word for disciple comes from two different words. The first word means to teach, especially with a rod or stick in discipline and the other means to shake up in order to measure (much like you would do when baking a cake and shaking up the flour to measure it out in a cup). Isaiah then writes, "Here am I, and the children the Lord has given me. We are signs and symbols in Israel from the Lord Almighty, who dwells on Mount Zion." And that is the point of God's glorious and gracious gifts. They are signs and symbols that Immanuel, God with us and dwelling with us has come. To flow in the gifts one must be a disciple. In like fashion, sometimes these gifts 'shake' things up. They have not disappeared as some say, but show us that God has a kingdom and government that increases and has no end. All people will be 'measured' by this kingdom.

Many study the word of God or study Jesus, never realizing that the gifts spoken about in the Bible and by Jesus are available for His disciples even today. I think the reason why some ignore God's gifts or function in them amiss is because the role of the Holy Spirit has somewhat diminished in certain circles. It is quite impossible to flow in the gifts outlined in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 without acknowledging the fact that the Holy Spirit must be an active overseer within the believer in order to move in these gifts. Over the next month or so we will study the 21 gifts listed in these

chapters. There are other gifts listed in the Bible such as marriage and children, wealth and peace, artistic ability and song, along with many others, but we will only take a look at these 21. Before we do, we should understand that the nature of the Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Spirit in this area of gifts is as a Giver. The Word of God flows as a giver through us. We are not the one receiving the gift. We allow the gift to flow through us to someone else. Each one of these 21 gifts fulfills a very special concept from the Old Testament for the word of the Lord. That concept is as a burden of love to be lifted up. Let me explain.

There are approximately seven primary words used in the Bible which translate as WORD. These seven words then branch off into many other words. Five are from the Old Testament and two are from the New Testament. The first two used most commonly in the New Testament are the words logos and rhema. They basically mean the same thing. The word logos leans more towards written discourse while rhema leans more toward oratory discourse. You can see this in the word logikos which means a rational word which is where we get our English word logical from. There are many other words, though not used quite so often. One is apaggello, which means to bring a word or a report (usually of completion). It conveys an idea of a messenger, which is what the word angel means.

In the Old Testament the most common word used is the word davar and its many

other relatives. Taken as a whole, especially when talking about the word of the Lord, it literally means a driving force which creates something out of nothing. One of its related words, devir (sometimes spelled debir) is most often translated as oracle. Another word is amar, as well as the similar words omer and imrah. Taken together these mean to speak or be talkative, especially publicly. One of the words means to bring forth, like a lamb and a promise! The relationship is understood as an offering. One of the words that stems from the word amar is the word ma'amar or memar for short. It's used in Daniel when he interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dream and the statement is made "that the words of the holy ones decreed.....(See Daniel 4:17)." Here the holy ones mean the angels and their word was the word of God which decreed Nebuchadnezzar's judgment. Another Old Testament word is millah and it means to speak the word, especially in poetry. This reminds me of what an awesome gift it is to give God's word to someone in poetry, as when Solomon wrote the Song of Songs. A word that is only used once is the word pithgam. It is of Chaldean origin and used by King Darius when he tells them not to break his word (decree) concerning the rebuilding of the temple (See Ezra 6:11). The last commonly used phrase translated as word is 'peh.' It means to blow through the mouth in speech and by inference to scatter. It is the only Old Testament word that gives us the understanding of being two-edged. In fact it is always fascinating for me to read Hebrew language scholars and discover how often the Lord uses one word that has several

diverse meanings almost in a two-edged way. Such is the case with the last word we will look at.

Though not translated as 'word,' it is used so often with the phrase, 'word of the Lord' that it should be studied in this list of commonly used phrases translated into English as 'word.' The Hebrew word is massa and it is most often translated as 'burden.' It means a burden or lifting up and is used of the priests in lifting up their burden as an offering or as a tribute. It is especially used as a song in singing a tribute or burden lifted up as praise to the Lord. In some Bibles it is translated as the word oracle. Most commonly in Isaiah or Jeremiah when the prophet speaks of the burden of the Lord concerning Moab or Damascus or Egypt, this is the word that is used. (Isaiah 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; 21:1, 11, 13; 22:1). In Jeremiah God chides them for asking what the burden or oracle of the Lord is (Jeremiah 23:33). The understanding here is that God is asking, "Will you really be burdened by what burdens me?" When the word massa is used the understanding is always that it is the burden of the word of the Lord, as we see in Zechariah 9:1 and 12:1. Especially in the books of the prophets, as we read the words "burden of the word of the Lord" we begin to understand this two-edged word concept. Moab, Damascus and Egypt were burdens on the people or questions that the people had and yet they should have been times where the people offered prayers up to the Lord in order to cast their burdens on Him. It's as if the prophets are exhorting them to

do that because when that is done, it now becomes the Lord's burden. The word massa is such a fascinating word because it is used for praise, prayer and prophesying the word of the Lord, but cannot technically be translated as 'word' because it really means 'burden.'

Simply put, that is the sum total of the gifts of the Lord when given as His word--- whether in song, praise, prayer, poetry, discourse or encouragement. Jesus' body was burdened and broken for us. Because He was lifted up on the cross and obediently went through what our discipline should have been, we are now His disciples. We receive the burden of the Lord through the precious Holy Spirit and we lift up that word to God. In return He now showers upon us a weighty (burden) gift to give in order to lift up someone else in love or exhortation!! Understanding Christ's brokenness helps us to understand the Holy Spirit's burden of love for us. This releases the gifts in us to lift the burden off of someone else. No other foundation can be laid in understanding the word of the Lord through His precious gifts, whether it is praying for someone's healing or prophesying or in praising God and lifting Him up, which always invites His presence. In His presence we are always refreshed and made new. Because of His love for us He died, and because of His love for us we are given gifts. It is for love's sake that we seek to give God's word as a gift. What a gift!! What a joy!! Log on next month and please join us over the next few months as we study the word of the Lord through His gifts given by the Holy Spirit to His people.

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