

Reports to Make Believers

While the emphasis in Romans 10:16 from Paul and based on Isaiah is less positive--"Lord, who has believed our report?", John is more positive in the reason for the writing of his version of the life of Christ.

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

One might say that perhaps Paul was more realistic than John, but they both as you will see in the details of John chapter 4 faced up to the realities that most of the Jewish people refused to believe in Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, the Son of God. As we proceed from the first miracle-sign recorded in John 2, you will recall about the turning of water in wine at the wedding feast of Cana, to the second sign in John chapter 4, the healing by Jesus of the nobleman's son, you will see how selective the Apostle John is in order to remain as much as possible on the positive side of believers over the negative side of unbelievers. One might think that John was entitled to be more positive in that his long ministry was at Ephesus among the Gentiles, while that of Paul was first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. However, it is Paul that organized so many churches among the Gentiles, including the church at Ephesus where John pastored; and Paul considered himself to be the Apostle primarily to the Gentiles. I think that you will

find that both John and Paul were both realistic and positive in the expectations from either believing or unbelieving hearers of the Gospel, but that John under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit chose the more positive route as a focus for the Gospel. However, you will find in John chapter 4 three kinds of responses in favor of believe or unbelief: (1) you will find the Gentile Samaritans who believed in Jesus simply because of what He told them, in other words because of the teachings of Jesus; (2) then you will find the Jewish nobleman of Capernaum in Galilee you was among "the people" who had to have "signs and wonders" in order to believe, as Jesus Himself is quoted by John as saying; and (3) then third you have a group of unbelievers hardly mentioned and with only two verses and nothing about the real incident in Jesus' hometown as recorded in Mark 6:1-6. Both Mark and John list the quote from Jesus that a prophet is without honor in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house; but while Mark gives the details of the rejection back at Nazareth, and recorded how Jesus Himself could do no mighty works there "because of their unbelief" except that He healed a few people, John gives a shorter version of the same quote from Jesus in John 4:44, and leaving out the details of the rejection at Nazareth where Jesus could do no mighty words because of the unbelief of His own people.

11-1: Jesus Taught the People in Samaria about A Special Gift of God.

The special gift of God Jesus taught about was what He called "living water." Of course, Jesus initiated conversation with the woman of Samaria who was at Jacob's well in order to secure water by asking for a drink of water. The woman was shocked because Jesus was obviously a Jew and he was willing to speak to a half-breed Samaritan woman. The Samaritans with their background of the northern kingdom of Israel who inter-married with Gentiles, were considered as Gentiles and even worse than that as half-breed Gentiles. Jesus was different from other Jews in that He was willing to speak and even ask a drink of water of the Samaritan woman.

Quickly Jesus turned to evangelism, the making of a believer out of this half-Gentile, by saying the equivalent of "if you only knew". If you only knew WHO is talking to you, and if you only knew the gift of God that this WHO can give to us of living water. And isn't it true also today that while we would feed and cloth and visit the sick and needy, and provide a drink of water, the greatest gift of God that we can give to any person on this earth is the living water which leads to everlasting life.

1. The Greatest Gift.

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Seems like there is a famous message entitled "The Greatest Gift"; and while I am not sure whether it is based on what Jesus taught the Samaritan woman here, we know that Jesus said this gift of God was living water.

2. The living water was not everlasting life but would spring into everlasting life.

Note that while the living water, Jesus taught, was not within itself the everlasting life; and we certainly do not want to promote evangelism like that by Peter Popoff where magical water is sold, Jesus is getting to a deeper spiritual reality where the living water becomes once inside the believer "a fountain" which in turn "springs up into everlasting life" (John 4:14)

You know how often Jesus compared the process of believing with eating the bread of life, or even eating His own body and drinking His blood which was the hard saying where He lost many disciples and a hard saying Catholic leaders have perverted to be the real body of Christ in the Lord's Supper. The comparison here is with living water.

3. Jesus distinguishes between ordinary water and this living water.

The way Jesus distinguished between this spiritual water and physical water like at Jacob's well was in terms of with the living water the believer would never thirst again. Jesus noted what the woman and many responders also know inherently, and that is that God can provide as a gift, and Jesus can give this gift, to satisfy a thirst for God and the eternal that all humanity has. {You see how the woman recognized Jacob, the father of the Jews, as a forefather.}

4. When Jesus told her things about herself like she had been married five times, she began to believe in Him as a Prophet.

Jesus and God know all about us. There was a certain translator in China that was working on a Chinese translation of the English version of the book of Romans. Finally after hours and days of work he said, "The One who wrote this book is the One Who Made Me", because He knows things about Me that only My Maker could know." We recognize that the Bible is the Word of God, Romans and the other of the 66 books, and in the words and teachings of the Bible we come to recognize that our Creator knows us. He knows the thirst we have for our Maker and He knows the thirst we have to live both more abundantly now as He intended in the Garden for us to live and to live forever.

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However there was much more to this beginning of faith on the part of the Samaritan woman. Not only did she know about her forefather Jacob, but she also knew about the Old Testament and Moses. She knew the prediction Moses made and recorded in Deuteronomy that someday God would send to His people another Prophet like Moses, and how His people should listen to him. Read it as recorded in Deuteronomy

“The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear...I will raise up for them a Prophet like you {Moses is now getting into what God told Him when the assembly of the people before Horeb did not want to listen to the voice of God directly lest they die}...from among the brethren {from the Jews and half-breed Samaritans}, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.” (Deuteronomy 18:15,18)

God told Moses, “It is good” what they say when they say “let us no longer hear the voice of God lest we die”. Perhaps they would have died had they continued to listen directly to the voice of God as it boomed out from Mount Sinai with the lightnings and thunders, and the promise from God that if any man or animals touched the mountain they would die. “It is good” God told Moses at Horeb, and sometimes we overlook this while we realize how in the “Confusion of the Congregation” the people did ask to hear God directly no more.

Well, here was a Mediator that God’s people could listen to without fear and without dying. A Mediator who overcame some of the awe of holiness by taking on human form and flesh. {Jesus was both God and man; and while sinless, the people could see and witness His obvious humanity more sometimes than His holiness and sinless perfection.} Jesus was that Promised Prophet that the people should listen to. And even as the people preferred to listen to Moses the Prophet more than God directly, just for survival sake, so also God already had at Mount Sinai in mind another Prophet like Moses, the Prophet Jesus, to whom the people could listen without dying; and in fact to whom the people must listen and believe in order to have salvation. Thus Moses continued in what God told him at Sinai.

“And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.” (Deuteronomy 18:19)

10-2: Jesus taught the Samaritans that He was the Messiah {Hebrew for the Greek word of Christ}, and they believed Him.

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It is a good description of the teaching work of Jesus that we read in Deuteronomy above as Moses told exactly what God said to him on Sinai. When God said that He would put the words into the mouth of Jesus and how that Jesus would say exactly the commands of God, God was talking about the teaching ministry of Jesus. Also when Moses, and God through Moses, talking about the people being held responsible for what was saved and how they would be cut off from among God's people, it was a reference to salvation. It was also a somewhat shield reference to this Prophet Jesus as the Messiah, the work of Messiah or Christ which became clearer through the later Prophets like Isaiah.

The Samaritan woman knew like most of the people in Palestine of that day about the Messiah which would be called Christ. She knew her Old Testament, and the people knew their Bible. She knew, in short, that the Prophet that could tell them all things would also be the Christ-Messiah that would provide the salvation of God.

"The woman said to Him, 'I know that Messiah is coming' (who is called Christ). 'When He comes, He will tell us all things.'" (John 4:25)

"Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am He.'" (John 4:26)

NOTE: How foolish do the critics look who superficially say that Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah, the Son of God. Here alone, and many other times in the Gospels, does Jesus say "I am". And no wonder the scoffers and gainsayers like in the Jesus Seminar, and in their book The Fifth Gospel, strive to discount the book of John as part of the Word of God, even as part of the Bible saying that we would strive to preserve the teachings of Jesus without the miracles and claims to be the Son of God.

Well, part of the teachings of Jesus, most fundamental in the teachings of Jesus--which by the way God has commanded to be listened to and heeded, even believed, is that Jesus is both the Prophet and the Messiah, the Son of God. **{If you need more on Jesus as the Messiah, please read the book of Isaiah, especially Isaiah 53.}**

1. The Samaritan woman believed.

The Samaritan listened to Jesus teach how that He was that Prophet and the Messiah-Christ, then she BELIEVED and went from the well to the village to tell

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all the people, "Come see a man that knew and told me all things that I ever did," and "is this not the Christ."

2. The Samaritans believed.

Because of the witness of the Samaritan woman, the Samaritans flocked out of the village to see and listen to Jesus for themselves; and then in John 4:42 the record plainly tells us that the Samaritans believed not simply because of what the woman said to them, but because they had heard for themselves about the Prophet and the Messiah. And what did they believe, scoffers?

**"...and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."
(John 4:42b)**

10-3: Another category of believers whom Jesus calls the YOU PEOPLE of "slow believers".

Now we would progress further into John 4, as we come to the second miracle-sign of the Gospel of John, to a category of believers which Jesus Himself called "slow believers".

"Then Jesus said to him {the Jewish nobleman who pleaded with Jesus to come down from Cana to Capernaum in order to heal his son before he died}, 'Unless YOU PEOPLE see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe.'" (John 4:47)

Yes, these words the Apostle John remembered as coming directly from Jesus; and for years at Ephesus as pastor he pondered over them, perhaps often taught and preached them to his congregation; and then near the end of the First Century after writing the book of Revelation, sat down to selectively record all that Jesus said and did in the presence of the disciples. Did you notice that when we read earlier the stated purpose of John in the writing of the Gospel of John.

"And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book..." (John 20:30,31)

John knew that Jesus performed a lot more than 7 miracle-signs. John had, no doubt, in his possession the other Gospels written by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. There is a lot of internal indications in the Bible that Mark even wrote the Gospel for which Paul gave him manuscripts and an outline at the home of John and

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Mary, the mother of Jesus. It is easy to think that John had preached and taught often from these three other Gospels. It is also easy to think that John with peculiar and special knowledge of Jesus as the disciple whom Jesus loved in a special way wanted to write a more positive account of the life of Jesus, selecting only seven miracles around which to weave the teachings and other doings of Jesus, and that how that the selection of only 7 gave the message that there was something more important than miracles in what Jesus said and did! Have you stopped to think that there is a message in only 7? If John is going to properly reflect the life of the Jesus that he knew so well, then the other than what is written than 7 miracles within itself tells us something about the content of the teachings of Jesus.

1. The "YOU PEOPLE" are the Jewish believers, like the Nobleman; and Jesus and John wants us to know the Jewish people of Jesus' own kin and own blood to be "slow believers". No doubt as Jesus Himself said made this statement of "you people will not believe unless you see wonders and signs", He was still smarting over the rejection in Nazareth that John only briefly mentions for a positive emphasis in His Gospel. However John does not want to distort the truth that most of their own kindred in the Jewish nation did not believe Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah-Christ, the Son of God; and it is not coincidental that John, perhaps parenthetically adds a few verses before this slow believer statement that a Prophet is not without honor except in His own country and among His own people. {Recall other Gospels give the details of the rejection at Nazareth.}

2. The "signs and wonders" of Jesus statement of John 4:48. What we learn from John, his method of writing and his purpose as clearly stated in John 20:30,31 about selecting only a few of the many signs Jesus performed in the presence of His disciples, is that the word for miracles, the word "sign" came originally from Jesus Himself. And we might want to add what Jesus meant by "wonders" since we know from Jesus and John that by signs He meant miracles; and what we find by a look at the rest of Scriptures, knowing of course that since all Scripture originates with God the Holy Spirit and therefore will be consistent with the same word have the same God given meaning in one place as in another, that what Jesus meant by "wonder" will be the same as for example in Acts 2:19 {of course, a quote by Peter from Joel 2:28-32}. There it is clear that while "signs" are done on the earth beneath, the "wonders" are done in the heavens above; and are more the natural acts of God. In fact some of those signs and wonders are defined as "blood and fire and vapor of smoke", also in the diminished light of the sun, the moon and the stars on the Great Day of the LORD and Lord just before the Second Coming of Christ.

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Anyway we know have from John 4, two of the three categories of believers and unbelievers that were promised in the introduction. The Samaritans who believed in Jesus as the Christ because of what He taught them, no miracles required; the people like the nobleman of Capernaum whose son lay sick unto death back at home; and the other Jewish people, which by the way are the majority of Jewish people, back at Nazareth who remained unbelievers in spite of what Jesus did and taught them. Of course, Jesus did heal a few sick folk, but nearly not all that He desired to do in his home town and among His own people; and we are astonished to know as we read in Mark that Jesus Himself could do there no might work because of their unbelief.

10-4: False Worshipers by their Unbelief Restrict the work of Jesus.

While John with his largely positive emphasis, like on believers more than on unbelievers and on "true worshippers" with no real mention of false worshippers at least in the Gospel of John {he did previously in Revelation with the messages to 7 churches}, would not find this in keeping with His primary purpose of the Gospel, we might still conclude based on both the context of John and John 4 and the rest of the Bible that FALSE WORSHIPPERS THEN AND TODAY, TODAY IN MANY CHURCHES, RESTRICT THE WORK JESUS HIMSELF CAN DO IN AND THROUGH THEM. Even as Jesus back in His hometown could do no real "mighty works" because of their own unbelief except to heal a few sick, even so in many churches today, Jesus because of the lack of faith of the church members can do no mighty works among the people except to heal a very few folks, sometimes and often even the few are not healed and the excuse of the members is made that "it was the will of God".

By the way you will notice that this section is listed in red, and their is a special reason for that. This book "Den of Thieves" actually has two simultaneous themes: (1) Many of our churches in the U.S. today have become "Hideouts for Bad Habits"--what Jeremiah and Jesus called "Den of Thieves"; and (2) Reports of Unbelievers, which now after the considerations of John and this chapter we might more positively want to call Reports to Reach Believers. This must come together as one united theme before the conclusion of the book, which will be done in the last chapter with the expected title of "Reports to Reach Believers", and this chapter will have as its foundations such sections as this that will here and in following chapters centered around the 7 miracles of John also be shown in red.

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In short, never let it be said that "there is no focus" to "Den of Thieves". After all, do you not think that there in the Temple when Jesus cleansed it, and even among a few of God's People of false worship in the Temple of Jeremiah were a few believers like the Samaritans, a few slow believers like most of the Jewish people, and even more unbelievers where Jesus could do no mighty works.

1. The definition of "True Worshippers" by Jesus to the Samaritan woman as He taught the essentials of salvation.

First of all, please as a preliminary a major supporting sub-theme of the primary theme of this book, note that true worship does not depend on the location.

Part 1 of the True Worship definition from Jesus:

"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the FATHER is seeking such to worship Him." (John 4:23)

(1). God in the Old Testament times, more so in the New Testament times and message, and today is busy about the task of "seeking" true worshippers. In fact, one might say that God works in churches today to seek true worshippers, sometimes successfully and more often not, and increasing less successfully as we fall deeper into the great apostasy called the Falling Away in II Thessalonians.

(2). The hour is coming referred to Old Testament times and all the predictions of more large scale and true worship, while naturally the "now" refers to how Jesus as the Mediator, Messiah, and Saviour made possible through the Cross and the message of believing this True Worship. You might make note of something you will hear about often in the main pursuit of this book theme, how that even as the real Temple or House of God where God will dwell among His people and be fully worshipped, by the way there is no temple building in the New Jerusalem as God and Jesus Themselves form the Temple, so real and full and complete Houses of God do not exist until this true worship in the New Jerusalem. {Also even as in the Old Testament times and in Herod's Temple of the day of Jesus the gates did allow the passage of abominations and the unclean and offensive to God and in churches also today, so in the New Jerusalem through those gates will pass no abominations or offences.}

Part 2 of the True Worshipper definition from Jesus:

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“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:24)

(1). God is Spirit. While God is a Person much like He has created man, He is above all a Spirit. Also God has sent the third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, to do His work on the earth of convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. When you see in your church worship, the world being convicted of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment in your worship service then the Spirit of God is in your worship. The opposite is true, when the preaching and the worship is such that sin remains untouched, righteousness is watered down, and the judgment of God is ignored then you can bet that the Spirit of is neither there nor true worship. According to II Thessalonians near the end of the Falling Away the Holy Spirit will be withdrawn from the earth, this is the famous loosing of Satan who was bound when the Holy Spirit was first sent to earth on the first passover after the Ascension; and many churches in their worship and worship services will never notice the difference. {Parenthetically we should not honor the Pentecostals and Charismatic here since they have so well fabricated and faked evidences of the Spirit, like in tongue-speaking, they will continue on in tongues and vain repetition and shouting long past the withdrawal of the Spirit from earth. Also note please that the Spirit will not be withdrawn from inside true believers and worshippers, and above all note as some proponents of false doctrine claim that this withdrawal of the Spirit from earth is as Christians are withdrawn from earth to meet the Lord in the air. There is nothing more at this point as this is the time of the Second Coming of Christ, while in II Thessalonians the Falling Away, by the way on the part of Christians and God's people and the leaders, also the visualization of the man of sin and the attack on Jerusalem and the camp of the saints and the final great battle, are still going on after the withdrawal of the Spirit.}

(2). Those who worship God must worship Him in spirit and truth.

Even as the Apostle John will after the Gospel of John write the little epistles of John where he urges fellow church members to “test the spirit” of their members, so Jesus lays the foundation for understanding on true worship and on true believers and worshippers when “spirit and truth” are emphasized over appearance, formality, and “a form of godliness”. Even as Paul had written in II Timothy 3:1-8 of a “form of godliness” among church members “which denied the power thereof”, and this spoke of the internal inside believers as con-

trusted to external form and religion, so the power thereof would also include the "spirit and truth", real spiritual reality, from Jesus.

10-5: Slow Believers are Believers.

Like John and John 4, we should end on a more positive note than false worshipers of God. This we will do with the Slow Believers as represented by the Jewish nobleman of Capernaum, and in fact his whole household, who did believe when they saw the miracle-sign which Jesus performed. Jesus told the nobleman, "Go your way back to Capernaum as your son lives". He believed Jesus and when home; and on the way home his servants met him to say that his son had begun to amend and was well. The nobleman asked the servants, at what exact hour did he begin to get well; and they told him yesterday at the seventh hour. The nobleman noted that this was the exact hour that Jesus said your son lives. The nobleman believed and his whole household believed.

It is far better to be a slow believer than an unbeliever that never comes around to faith, who like the people of Nazareth restrict what Jesus can do in their own life and in the life of others by their unbelief. We should definitely distinguish between unbelievers and slow believers; we must distinguish between reports of unbelievers and the slow to believe, and we would be more positive in our expectations when we give reports on Jesus and salvation, especially from the Gospel of John, more positive that people will believe; and further in this book we will switch from extensive emphasis on "Reports for Unbelievers", in the church or outside the church, to "Reports to Reach Believers".

Positively look at the number of "believes" in John 4:46-54 centered around the miracle-sign of the healing of nobleman's son. {A trend learned from Jesus that John will practice as the word "believe" looms large and significant in the following chapters of the Gospel of John right up to the stated purpose of reaching for "believe" of 20:30,31.}

1. Jesus used the word "believe" in His description of the people of His own nation that were slow to believe, as in "you will by no means believe" (4:48).
2. When in John 4:50 it is recorded that "the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and went his way", it was after Jesus told him to go on his way as his son lived.
3. There is another reinforced believing on the part of the nobleman, and his household, as he had his faith reinforced by the evidence in John 4:53,54 that

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the son got better at the same seventh hour when Jesus said your son lives. {For those who are carried away by the present day carriers of the false Gospel of Prosperity and faith healers, you will note several things about this healing by Jesus, who by the way learned to heal from the way God has healed and continues to heal: (1) Jesus healed by starting the healing process; and (2) Jesus healed as the son got better.}