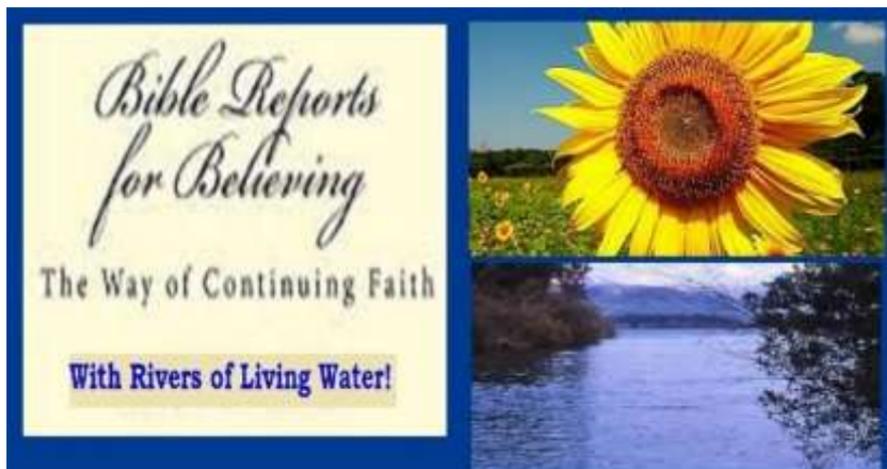


Introduction to Bible Reports for Believing.



Even as the second step in the two-step process of salvation was introduced in the "Believe and Be Baptized" volume, volume 3 of the LEARN CHRIST commentaries, that second step being "Be Baptized", God's part in salvation and the baptism being the "one baptism", or "one salvation" doctrine of the whole summary of total doctrine in Ephesians 4:5, so in the "believing" of John 20:31 behind the initial faith of the "believe", you have this same second step of the two-step process in faith and salvation. Actually, like the Gospel of John itself, the primary source of these Bible Reports in this book, this book is even more about the BELIEVING than the BELIEVE. Primarily

because you can have "believe", that is initial faith, without the continuity of "believing"; but you cannot have "believing" without first the ability to "believe" that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of God; and while thousands of church members have based their confidence, and still do base their confidence in that initial faith and single act of faith and profession for salvation, they do not for many years, especially 40 years, continue to exercise that faith that is so necessary for salvation, a salvation that can last eternally and that generate the religious dimensions of personality which Jesus called "the abundant life" (John 10:10).

By no means are young and initial believers neglected. For example even as John 4 is directed to believers of the first kind, so chapter 5 based on John 4 is on "Bible Reports to Make Believers". God has a certain way through the Holy *Spirit*, the new birth, and engendered faith to make or create believers for Himself and for eternity on the new earth, and that certain way through the Lord Jesus Christ and His death on the cross {the atonement} He has well communicated through the Prophets and the Apostles like the Apostle John.

REPORTS, like any book especially on Bible, that is well developed, has gone through 3 stages of development: first as Reports for Unbelievers, then as Reports for Believing, and finally as the realization was made that the believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Messiah

and Son of God was complete with approximately the first 8 chapters and still the Reports were going on and on, until it was hard to stop adding chapters, with the final comprehension that "believe" and "believing" are a two stage process. Our problem today, especially, in the Falling Away, is not to get people the proper Bible Reports to believe in this Jesus--even "the devils believe in God and tremble" writes Pastor James--but to get church members and others beyond the first stage of "believe" to the second stage of "believing". And to be honest while the first 8 chapters centered primarily around the seven miracle signs of John are necessary foundation, most of the book is to promote the kind of continuous "believing" that engenders real salvation, an abundant life here and an everlasting life that begins here and continues on the New Earth.

And this is also true in the Gospel of John itself, especially as supplemented by the epistle of I John where John, and the Holy Spirit through John, found it necessary to write a little but very definitive "Commentary on Believing"; many of the terse statements of which you have puzzled over for years if you are at all serious about study of the Bible as the Word of God. This two stage saga is also highlighted by the obvious fact that the Apostle John seems to end, like Morris points out in the New International Commentary on the Gospel of John, with the statement of purpose of the Gospel Report in John 20:30,31; and then after this seemingly conclusion, let us say it could be the conclusion of the first stage part, to believe, if you could really complete sever one

from the other, which you can not, comes John chapter 21 with more resurrection appearances of Jesus to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias where "Jesus showed Himself" {this was the third time Jesus showed Himself to the Apostles as John notes in John 21:14 after "He was raised from the dead"} (John 21:1) "again to the disciples", where Jesus leads Peter all the way from belief to believing with the challenge to feed the sheep in proportion to the real love (John 21:17) {also a three time question about love with a three time demand to feed the sheep--three appearances, three questions, and three demands for ministry that "at the mouth of two or more witnesses, every word might be established--the famous Top Topic #3 of the Bible about which you have heard, the "If Two Agree", or more, "The Composite Witness of the Bible"; and then the terminal focus of Peter and Jesus on the Apostle John with Jesus statement that if John "remains until He comes again" Peter what business is that to you, and John's effort in those few verses of the last of John 21 to correct the false rumor that John would live until Christ came again. {John says that is not what Jesus said, and that the rumor was false, John 21:23). Finally in the chapter conclusion of John 21:24 and 25: (a) John notes personally that he is that Apostle John whom Jesus loved in a special way, the same John who wrote all these chapters of the Gospel of John, and known among the Apostles and the first Christians as the Apostle of a True Testimony--and by the way that theme of "the fellowship of the Apostles" as a way to separate those in fellowship and out of fellowship, then and today, John will continue in I John as he

knows that he must develop more the second stage of believe and believing; and (b) a brief flashback in John 21:25, the last verse of the Gospel, with the many "other things" Jesus did, see here how it goes beyond just "signs", even though I hope you will come to know the signs of John as miracles and more, much more, with the impossibility of a library big enough to contain all the books that would elaborate on all the things Jesus "did", "one by one".

Our confidence in the Lord Jesus as the Messiah **{Hebrew for Christ}**, the Son of the Living God is based on our confidence in the Reports of the Bible as the Word of God; and vice versa. Since ultimate truth is a circle about the character and personality of God, rather than a flow of logic, scientific method, syllogisms and generalizations as we humans have been trained by the world to do, faith in the reality that God used over 40 men over a period of more than a thousand years to communicate truth in Reports from God to those humans who would listen and meet the criterion for understanding is intertwined in a spiral about the three members of the Trinity--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the Book that God wrote.

In this book, "Reports for Believing", we try to simultaneously look at both the content of the Reports and the method, the Bible as the Word of God, that God chose to deliver those reports; thus to hopefully engender "believing" at the same time in both the Book and the prime message of the book, that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. Yes, this implies

a certain amount of faith that God lives; that is, that there is a "the Living God"; and that since He lives and precedes all human history as recorded in the Bible, that He strives to communicate to His human creatures. Don't you just feel a lot better now by just accepting that "fundamental postulate of all rational thinking", or as expressed

in one of the Reports of the Bible, the book of Romans on the human side from the Apostle Paul, and in particular the 17th verse of the tenth chapter:

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17)

How many reports directly from God, in the Bible, and indirectly from His servants through the years have you heard? **{You will be held accountable, you know, for every one of them you have heard; for the God of outreach and love, just two aspects of His personality or character, is also the God of ultimate judgment and justice, though also is in His large list of personal characteristics is also patience and forbearance. Yet there is also a limit to the patience of God with Jews and Gentiles.}** Jew or Gentile, the Reports from God have gone out over all the world, so that the Apostle Paul continues under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit **{"holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Spirit" (1 Peter 1:21)}** on the subject of hearing after the Romans 10:17 verse above.

"But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed {and quotes from David and Psalm 19:4}: 'Their sound

has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.” (Romans 10:18)

The sound of these words and as they are gathered into Reports like in the Gospel of John and in the book of Romans, often both based on the earlier reports from the Prophet Isaiah would be what it is desired you will read and hear in these following pages as you would simultaneously develop confidence in the Book of Reports and the prime and consistent message of those reports, expressed by the Apostle John in the following gist 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; 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)

Yes, I added to “the Son of God” as part of the challenge to faith, the way it was expressed by Simon Peter when Jesus said “Will you go away also?” after many disciples followed Jesus no more; but in one of the first public professions of faith, and certainly the most famous, Peter expressed for the Apostles and other disciples present that: (1) to whom in the world should they go, since only Jesus had the words of eternal life; (2) that they believed that

Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ; and (3) that they believed that He was and is the Son of the Living God. There are many “gods” that clamor with their own

brands of reports for your faith! These are not living gods; and to beg one of the issues of this book, one from the Prophet Jeremiah, these other gods often treated as if they did live and did demand loyalty, are "broken cisterns that can not contain water." About the only thing they can do for you is to give you an alternative loyalty to other than the Living God, most generally it means that you in the final analysis give your loyalty and faith to the only other supernatural being in the Universe, Satan himself.

However, back to the gist of the Gospel of John above, in John 20:30,31 **{and by the way, have you ever seen so clearly stated in any religious or secular report the gist or purpose of a book as in John}**, already you have with faith in Jesus and the Book of the Reports another challenge to believe--that all these things were done in the presence of the disciples **{we know at one time besides the 12 Apostles, there were over 500 disciples, and for example there were 120 in the upper room after the Ascension of Jesus--oops, another challenge to faith but I warned you that ultimate truth as Dr. R.A. Millikan, the Nobel prize winning physicist would say, travels in a circle about the Trinity of God and the Bible Reports}**, that the disciples were there around Jesus during His approximately three and one half years of ministry before Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension; and that these disciples indeed saw all these "signs" that Jesus did. **{By the way Simon Greenleaf, the former Dean of the Harvard Law school and a recognized authority on evidence, stated that the testimony of the Gospel writers--Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John--would**

stand up in any court of law; that what they told and wrote of these sounds and words and reports would be a "prima facie" case for Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God.}

And perhaps you have not realized that anytime you deal with the Book and the Reports of the Book, you are simultaneously dealing with history and God. Even as Bible scholars like to say, "The Bible is a gradual revelation of God coming to an eternal climax in Christ", so God made Himself known to humanity in the history primarily of the Jewish people. Of course in the book of Acts and primarily through the Apostle Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, that history of God expanded to the Gentiles throughout the Roman world. For example, although Paul established the church at Ephesus--later crucified with Peter at Rome according to tradition--by the end of the first century the Apostle John had lived and pastored there with Mary, the mother of Jesus, for many years. {Except for the short interval when John was exiled by the Roman government to the Isle of Patmos where he wrote on the human side the book of Revelation.}

Fret not; we are not going to repeat the whole history of the Hebrew nation from Abraham to Moses to the Promised Land, and beyond that through the United Kingdom under David and Solomon, nor the Divided Kingdoms of Israel to the north and Judah to the south, with respectively their ordained captivities in Assyria for Israel, Babylon/Persia for Judah; although the challenge of this last and darkest period in the

history of the Jews also brought the message of the prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and at the end of the Old Testament, Malachi. We will not repeat this history of the Jews, because Paul, a Hebrew of the Hebrews and a religious lawyer of the nation, did that for us in the book of Romans; except to say that we Gentiles were the second choice of God the Father for His own people. "We were grafted in the main branch" (Romans 11:23), Paul would say and does say. And any time during this Fulness of the Gentiles (Romans 11:25), another phrase from Paul, this time where no doubt America leads in believers and in evangelization of the world, we dare not forget our real place among the total body of the kingdom of God.

All this has been said in order to bring you back to Paul's argument of Romans 10:16 **{ "who has believed our report" }** and following. What was God doing while most of the Jewish nation was rejecting His own Son, and therefore also Himself? You were asked by this writer earlier how much of the reports you have heard; however here in Romans 10 the focus of Paul, and God through Paul, is on what the nation of Israel has heard by way of reports. Know then in the first century and know today is the historical fact that most of Israel, except of course for Jesus and His Apostles and early disciples and early churches, rejected Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God. But you see, Paul makes the point in Romans 10:19 and with a quote from Deuteronomy 32:21, by the way written during the time of Moses and while the Hebrews were still forming up as a nation:

"But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: 'I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.'" (Romans 10:19 and Deuteronomy 32:21)

What it comes down to is DID ISRAEL REJECT GOD OR DID GOD REJECT ISRAEL? And since the history of the total Bible reports, from the law of Moses and Deuteronomy to Paul and Romans, tells us that God was going someday to give priority to a nation of Gentiles over Israel, and that this decision by God was recorded in these words from God Himself before Israel even became a nation **{they were still more a tribe or congregation wandering in the wilderness at the time, having not yet entered into the Promised Land}**, then you must decide that God made the final decision and choice.

NOTE: This is important; for although through the years, you may have thought that the ultimate decision on salvation, or the relationship between you and God, was your own, it is not. Just like with Israel, God makes the final choice!

And while there is neither time nor space in this brief introduction to describe how specifically from Zechariah and Daniel, two-thirds of the Jewish nation would be rejected by God a specific time after the Crucifixion, and how one third would believe but go through persecution; and also introductions as in the other Writing Prophets and their reports of how the majority of God's people would then come from among the Gentiles.

It is not that God didn't try, and not that God does not try; and bottom line of Romans chapter 10, Paul makes that clear with a quote from Isaiah 65:1.

"All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people." (Romans 10:21 and Isaiah 65:1)

And even as the cover for this book represents those outstretched hands of God for all His human creatures, and for salvation--the meaning of the hands of God--so also these "Reports for Believing" based on John and Romans, John and Paul, Jews and Gentiles, would prayerful represent the best humanly possible of God's outreach for you! This introduction to you of Isaiah 65 with the first verse, where you get the picturesque image of God reaching out to His people in spite of the heart ache of rebellion and disobedience; and how He does that all day long for every day since the creation of this Universe, will finally conclude in the last chapter of this book, just like the rest of Isaiah 65, with THE NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH. For even as salvation through the fulness of the Gentiles after one-third of the Jews of Jesus' time was the plan of God, not an after thought, so also the NEW HEAVEN and the NEW EARTH were in the Old Testament plan of God; goodness, you see it here in Isaiah hundreds of years before Christ. As the days in Israel darkened, as keeping the covenant of God seemed hopeless; and about the same time that God introduced an improved way of salvation through Christ and righteousness by faith with the assistance of a NEW birth, He also began to present the ultimate

hope of the New Earth where righteousness would finally be achieved, where the New Jerusalem would be lowered down from earth on Mount Zion, and where God would finally and eternally dwell Himself with man. You hear and will hear a lot of sounds about eschatology, the "last things" of the Bible; but you will not and do not hear much about this New Earth, yet it is the very key to God's plan of salvation for humanity, Jews and Gentiles.