

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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More About Rhēma-Words

by Dan Trygg

“And Simon answered and said, ‘Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but at Your rhēma-word I will let down the nets.’ ⁶ And when they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish...” Luke 5:5-6

“Then Peter went down to the men and said, ‘Here I am, the one you're looking for. What is the reason you're here?’”

²² They said, ‘Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who has a good reputation with the whole Jewish nation, was divinely directed by a holy angel to call you to his house and to hear rhēma-words from you.’... ⁴⁴ As Peter was speaking these rhēma-words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all the ones hearing the logos-message.” Acts 10:21-22,44

“Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The rhēma-words that I say to you I do not speak from myself, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.” John 14:10

We have been talking about receiving rhēma-words from the Holy Spirit. **There are two main Greek words translated as “word” in English.** The most common one is logos (331x in the NT). This word means, “word, message, thought, thing or matter”. It refers more to the content of the message or word. It is about *what* is said, not so much about *how* it is communicated. When used of the “word of God”, it tends to be more about the objective, universal truth. By contrast, the word, rhēma (69x in the NT) refers to “that which is said, word, saying, expression, utterance, thing or matter”. It tends to be more personal and subjective in nature, ... a personal word of direction or instruction. It is more about the *communication*, ... the *fact* that it is said..., than about the *content* of what is said. It is important to state that there is much overlap here. These are not mutually exclusive terms, just differences in emphasis and focus. The logos-word is about the *impersonal idea*, where the rhēma-word is more about a *personal communication*. The logos-word is more about *study* and *learning*; the rhēma-word is more about *listening* and *application*. The logos-word is more about what you *know*, whereas the rhēma-word is more about what you *do*. Again, these are not exclusive ideas. You can *hear* logos-words, when they are spoken, and they are *also* meant to be applied in your life, but **the emphasis of a rhēma-word is that it is spoken or personally-communicated to you, and it is typically a directive you are to act upon.**

A good example of this is found in Luke 5, where Jesus tells Peter to go up again into the deep water and put down his nets for a catch. Peter is a professional fisherman. He and his crew had labored the entire night, and had caught nothing. I'm sure, from a natural perspective, he may have been tempted to say, “Look, You are a carpenter, I know about fishing.” Instead, however, he said, “But at Your rhēma-word, I will lower the nets.” Obviously, this is a very specific and personal situation, ... a circumstance where Jesus' rhēma-word was only applicable to Peter, and only to that time. Peter's obedience showed at least his respect for Jesus, even if he did not have faith to expect much. When they let down the nets, they enclosed a great school of fish, and their nets began to break. Peter called to James and John to come help him, and they filled the boats so full that they began to sink. Seeing the result of what had taken place when he had obeyed Jesus' rhēma-word, he fell on his knees, exclaiming, “Go away from me, for I am a sinful man, Lord!” The text next says, “For *amazement* had overwhelmed him and the ones with him, upon the catch of fish which they had taken. ... Jesus said, ‘Do not fear, from now on you will be catching people.’ And bringing their boats back to shore, they left everything and followed Him.” **Can you see the power of that experience, and the significance of the use of rhēma? It was a specific, personal word to Peter that was an instruction for him to follow. When he did, he encountered what he and the others recognized as an “act of God”, and they were overwhelmed. This experience led to a greater level of faith and commitment.**

We have another example in Luke 2:8-19, the story of the angels that appeared to the shepherds on the night of Jesus' birth. First, one angel appeared to them, glowing with the radiance of heavenly glory. He delivered his message to the shepherds, including a “sign” for them to look for, implying that they ought to search for and find the Christ who had been born that day. They would “find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger”. Then there was a multitude of angels in the sky, praising and glorifying God. After they left, the shepherds said to one another, “Now then, let us go through unto Bethlehem and see this rhēma-word, the thing having-happened, that the Lord has made known to us” (vs. 15). They hurriedly went off to Bethlehem and found-after-searching both Mary, Joseph and the infant lying in the manger. “But seeing, they thoroughly-made-known concerning the rhēma-word being spoken to them concerning this child (vs. 17), and all the ones hearing were amazed concerning the things being spoken by the shepherds. But Mary was treasuring up all these rhēma-words, pondering them in her heart” (vs. 19). Here, the rhēma-word was the declaration and instruction of the angel. It was a personal word to the shepherds, ... a word that they understood to be a directive to look for this child. When they found Him, as the angel had said, then they “thoroughly made known the rhēma-word” to the others. To every one who heard, it produced amazement. They

clearly recognized God at work. Furthermore, it was further corroborating evidence and encouragement to Mary and Joseph regarding Who this baby was. **You can see how personal and powerful this rhēma-word was to those who were present, and were involved. This was *not* just a story, ...it was an encounter with something from God Himself.**

In a third example from the NT, Cornelius, a God-fearing Roman centurion, was instructed by an angel to send for Peter, who was staying at the home of Simon the tanner in Joppa, thirty miles south from where he was. He would speak rhēma-words from God to him and his house. When Peter came, he found that Cornelius had assembled his relatives and close friends, all eager to hear what he had to share. As he briefly shared the good news about Jesus, that He is Lord of all, describing His Spirit-filled preaching and healing ministry from the time of John the Baptist, His death and resurrection, and that He is appointed to be judge of the living and the dead, and that everyone who trusts in Him receives forgiveness of sins in His name, the Holy Spirit fell on everyone who heard the logos-message. It was evident that the Spirit was poured out upon them, because they began speaking in tongues and praising God, even as the disciples had at Pentecost. Peter commanded that they be baptized into the name of Jesus the Christ. **Here, the rhēma-word was the logos-word. What made it a rhēma-word? It was specially, personally directed to Cornelius and his group. The truth of the logos was presented in a way that required a personal response.**

We see a similar connection between the logos-word and the rhēma-word in 1 Peter 1:23-25. There, in verse 23, the recipients of the letter were told that they were born again from the living and abiding logos-word of God, but in verse 25 the “word” that abides until the age is the rhēma-word, and it is the rhēma-word that was preached to them. How do we put this together? **Again, the gospel message, ...the facts, content, and truth of the logos-word are the information of the preaching, but the personal presentation and speaking of the rhēma-word presented those facts in a more direct way that emphasized a response.** It is possible to *know* but not to *believe*. The rhēma-word presses for a decision. So, Romans 10:17 says, “So faith is out from hearing, and hearing by means of the rhēma-word of Christ.” **A personal, spoken word is often more effective at eliciting the response of faith than just the facts by themselves.**

It is very important to understand the logos-word, ...the facts, teachings, doctrine and content of the revealed word of God in the scriptures. There is no question about that. But it is vital to understand that the entire thrust of the logos-message of the Bible is that God wants to establish open communication, personal interaction and intimacy with us. We have been reconciled to God through the blood of the cross, ...and we now have access to God’s Presence through Jesus. He encourages us to draw near to Him with confidence. Furthermore, He has given us the Holy Spirit to be our Teacher, to reveal to us the things of Jesus, the things that God has freely given to us. And we are to be led by the Spirit. **The norm that we see revealed in the book of Acts is that the Spirit “speaks” to believers** (Acts 8:29; 10:19; 11:12; 13:2; 20:23; 21:11), **and many times He inspires believers to speak forth utterances prompted by Him** (Acts 2:4,17,18,33; 4:8,31; 5:32; 6:10; 10:45,46; 11:28; 13:9-11; 19:6). Jesus Himself had said that *His* teachings were not from Himself. They came from God (Jn. 7:15-17). In John 14:10, we receive a little glimpse into how that worked. Jesus said, “The rhēma-words that I say to you I do not speak from myself, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.” In John 12:47-49, He had said, “If anyone hears My rhēma-words, and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. The one rejecting Me (setting Me aside), and not receiving My rhēma-words, has one who judges him; the logos-word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. For I did not speak out from Myself, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what I will speak.” **Jesus did not speak only from the accumulated understanding of His own mind.** He learned to hear or perceive what the Father inside of Him was giving Him to say, and He expressed those thoughts and words. **He learned to hear rhēma-words from His Father, and He delivered rhēma-words to those He personally addressed, ...and He also spoke logos-words as general teachings to the crowds, as needed.**

This is what God wants to do in your life, and my life. Jesus said that the one who is from God hears the rhēma-words of God (Jn. 8:47). If you are a believer, you have been “taught by God”, meaning that you “heard from the Father, you learned, and you responded to Him” (Jn. 6:45). You have received the Spirit who is from God so that you might know the things being graciously-given to you from God (1 Cor. 2:12). Just as Jesus had the Father at work inside of Him, giving Him what to say and do, in a similar way **we have the Holy Spirit actively at work in us to teach and empower us to do the will of God. He wants to speak to us personal words, rhēma-words, which are not for everyone. They are for us in our circumstances.** We are to pray for and to hold on to these personal words in faith, and we will receive what we are promised as we persevere (Jn. 15:7). These personal instructions are the strategy of God for us to defeat the enemy in our spiritual battles. The sword of the Spirit is the rhēma-word of God, ...it is what He tells us personally to do in our particular circumstance and situation (Eph. 6:17). Of course, **if we are going to be able to function in the gifts of the Spirit, they are often rooted in a prompting, revelation or communication from God inside of us.** Either God is personally prompting *us* to take action, or He is revealing something to us to be a rhēma-word to *someone else*. **If the Spirit is at work in you to do or speak something, your job is to implement that.**