

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Rhēma-Words Hidden For A Time

by Dan Trygg

“Let these words sink in: the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men.’⁴⁵ But they did not understand this rhēma-word; it was having-been-concealed from them so that they could not perceive it.” Luke 9:44,45

“Then He took the Twelve aside and told them, ‘Listen! We are going up to Jerusalem. Everything that is written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished.³² For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and He will be mocked, insulted, spit on;³³ and after they flog Him, they will kill Him, and He will rise on the third day.’³⁴ They understood none of these things. This rhēma-word was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.” Luke 18:31-34

“He is not here, but He has been resurrected! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee,⁷ saying, “The Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men, be crucified, and rise on the third day’?”⁸ And they remembered His rhēma-words.” Luke 24:6-8

“Now the boy Samuel was ministering to Yahweh before Eli. And rhēma-word from Yahweh was rare in those days, visions were infrequent.” 1 Samuel 3:1

We have been looking at the phenomenon of receiving personal words from God, ... words or communication from Him that are specific, for a particular time or situation, or which possibly offer unique insight, understanding or direction regarding an event or circumstance. The Greek word, rhēma, often is used in the scriptures to communicate such things. You would imagine that such specific, direct communications from God would be *clear* and *easily understood*, but that is not always the case. Sometimes, we can *misperceive* the communication itself, ...or its intended meaning *may be hidden* from us, even though it is clearly expressed to us.

For example, in Luke 9:44, shortly after Peter’s confession that Jesus was the Messiah, right after the Transfiguration on the mountain, and Jesus’ casting out a demon that the disciples could not remove, ...while everyone was “astonished at the greatness of God”..., Jesus turned to His disciples and said to them, “Let these words sink in: the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men.” The following verse says, “But they did not understand (lit., they did not know) this statement (rhēma-word); it was concealed (‘having-been-covered-or-veiled’) from them so that they might not perceive it, and they were afraid to ask Him about it.” **Here is a word that is both “hidden” but also clearly stated. Jesus wanted to *introduce the thought*, but did not intend to *explain the meaning* to them, at this time. This is a new notion about rhēma-words: *They could be used to begin to prepare someone for something that is yet to happen.* The rhēma-word is clearly stated, but its meaning is obscure.**

We see the same phenomenon again, a few chapters later: “Then He took the Twelve aside and told them, ‘Listen! We are going up to Jerusalem. Everything that is written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished.³² For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and He will be mocked, insulted, spit on;³³ and after they flog Him, they will kill Him, and He will rise on the third day.’³⁴ They understood none of these things. This rhēma-word was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.” Again, **the rhēma-word, itself, was quite clear.** He took His men aside, looked into their eyes, and called them to pay attention. He told them exactly what was about to take place. **They heard the words, but they did not “get it”. They could not put the information that they had, ...their experiences with Jesus, what they knew of Him and what He could do, the expectations they had for what “should be” taking place, based upon their previous beliefs..., and the words Jesus was now speaking to them together into a cohesive whole.** Again, **the meaning was “hidden” from them, and they could not make sense of it.** The statement of the word was quite clear, but the meaning was hidden, beyond their ability to take in right then.

Why was this important? Because, even though they did not immediately understand the rhēma-words that were spoken, *they would later.* Especially in the scenario of Jesus’ suffering and dying, *they needed to be able to look back and see that this truly was the plan of God all along.* The betrayal, beating, scourging, suffering, and dying were all things that Jesus had been talking about long before they took place. The clarity and intensity of His expression to them was important. It would help them to recall that, yes, Jesus *did* say those things. On the very evening of His betrayal, immediately *before* He announced that one of them would betray Him, He said, “...it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me.’¹⁹ **From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it *does occur*, you may believe that I am” (Jn 13:18-19). **This was intentional.** It was meant to be a clear confirmation that God was *in* what was about to happen. It was part of the plan, ...part of what was prophesied. They would not understand, at that moment, but *they would be able to look back and see that God had been preparing them to see and make sense of what was *inconceivable* to them, ...until it *happened!****

Remember how devastated and lost the disciples were, after the death of Jesus? All their hopes and expectations were *shattered*. The One they had thought was the Messianic King was dead! The One they had chosen to give up everything for was laying in a tomb. Now what? They were grieving, hurt, confused. They were afraid. Were the chief priests and Pharisees going to be coming after *them*? Friday evening came, and it was the Sabbath. That lasted until Saturday evening. There was no way they could travel on the Sabbath. They waited until Sunday morning, the first day of the week. Some of the women were determined to go to the tomb and anoint Jesus' body for burial. *No one was expecting anything other than death. Jesus was dead.* When they arrived, they saw that the heavy stone disc that had closed the doorway had been rolled aside. They entered the tomb, but there was no body there. Suddenly two men in dazzling apparel stood with them. They said, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen. **Remember how He spoke to you, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.**" *And they remembered His rhēma-words.* Suddenly, the light came on, ...instantly the veil was lifted and they were able to put-together the words Jesus had spoken beforehand with the events that had taken place. **Hope and faith sprung to life!**

This is not unlike the experiences that the apostle Paul was given to prepare him for his arrest and long imprisonment. Remember, he purposed with the Spirit to go from Ephesus, through Macedonia and Achaia, and then return to Jerusalem. He even concluded that from there, he would go to Rome (Acts 19:21). On his way back from Greece, he stopped to talk with the Ephesian elders, as he was traveling toward Jerusalem. He said that he was "having been bound in the Spirit" to go there, not knowing what would take place, but in every town he visited the Spirit was testifying that "bonds and afflictions await me" (20:22,23). They stayed in Caesarea for a number of days, and again a number of people prophesied of this. Agabus, a well-known, established prophet came down from Jerusalem, and prophesied that he would be bound by the Jews in Jerusalem, and handed over to the Gentiles. People tried to dissuade him from going, but he was unmoved, saying that he was prepared for whatever awaited him. In the end, he *was* seized by the Jews, taken by the Gentiles, and held as a prisoner for the next two years in Caesarea (24:27). He appealed to Caesar, and was sent to Rome. He endured shipwreck and was held under house arrest for two more years in Rome (28:30). **The specific, personal words spoken to him by believers along the way had been confusing, because they were "hidden", in that they were about future events.** People disagreed about what they meant, thinking that Paul should not go to Jerusalem, ...but the Spirit had specifically told him to go. **In the end, these personal words to Paul prepared him for a difficult and arduous ordeal, ...one that would last for over four years!**

The impact of personal rhēma-words can be powerful. As we think of Paul's experience, *we can see how significant it was to have people in town after town that he visited who were able to hear and deliver such clear messages from God.* This is part of the design and equipping of bodies of believers with spiritual gifts, as well as part of our own heritage in the Lord. **God wants us to hear and discern personal communications from Him to us.** Proverbs 3:32 says that God is intimate with the upright, and Psalm 25:14 declares that "the secret-counsel of Yahweh is for those who revere Him." Being "taught by God" is part of what He says belongs to the "servants of Yahweh" as our inheritance in Him (Isa. 54:13,17). This prophetic expectation and promise are fulfilled in the new covenant, where **the Holy Spirit is given to us to be our Teacher, Counselor, and the One to lead and direct us.** He is the "promise of the Father", which Jesus has poured out upon the church. Interestingly, when He first came in this new capacity at Pentecost, He gave people the ability to speak words they did not otherwise know. Peter explained that this was a fulfillment of what had been spoken through Joel, ...namely, that the Spirit would be poured out to enable God's people to receive revelation and deliver messages from Him (Acts 2:16-18).

God also wants us to hear and deliver personal communications from Him to others. This is especially true in our interaction with one another in the body of Christ. The gifts of prophesy, words of knowledge and words of wisdom, as well as the gift of tongues with interpretation, are especially suited to receive and pass along rhēma-words from God to others. While these giftings can be regular, established giftings people repeatedly use, they are also giftings that any of us can receive as the Spirit may choose to give to us on a particular occasion. We know, from Ephesians 4:15,16, that **when we gather as the people of God, a key part of our ministry to one another is to express truth from Jesus to build each other up in love.** We saw in Acts that this was a common experience in churches of that time. Unfortunately, we have gotten away from expecting, developing and utilizing these giftings in our meetings.

Samuel lived at a time when rhēma-words were rare among the people of God, and visions did not take place often. People were not expecting them, seeking them or even believing that God was interested in communicating with His people. *When God first spoke to Samuel, he misperceived what was taking place.* He thought Eli was calling him. **As he learned to engage with God, his ability to hear and deliver messages from God to people became more developed, established and evident to others.** Sometimes his personal messages were fulfilled immediately. At other times they seemed delayed, "hidden", even for years. But, in the end, God made him a dependable source of His rhēma-words.