

November 10, 2022

Dear Members and Friends,

We returned from the observance of this year's Feast of Tabernacles to look forward to the next spring festival season—beginning with Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. Who can tell how many more annual Holy Days we will still be able to celebrate before Jesus Christ returns? A contract for accommodations for next year's Feast of Tabernacles in Germany has been signed, and we are looking into the possibility of observing the Feast here in the USA in Colorado. Scattered members and friends, including from Canada, the USA, and Australia were listening in to our live services as well.

In Germany, we had nine baptisms, and with a baptism on the Feast of Trumpets, we actually had ten. Also, this was the *tenth* year that we kept the Feast in Germany as the *Kirche des Ewigen Gottes*. We also had an ordination to the office of deacon, with more ordinations to follow in time. We also had the highest number in attendance ever in Germany. In comparison, attendance in the USA was down, due in large part to sicknesses and the inability, because of frailties, to attend the Feast site in person. Guests did not show up because our Feast site was not "convenient" enough for them (What a difference in attitude and zeal when considering the dedication of those guests from great distances who attended in Germany). Numerical growth of membership and attendance in the USA, the UK, Canada and Australia is not high at this point, but this might change in the future.

For several months, we have been conducting an advertisement campaign over the Internet, offering our free booklet, "*The Fall and Rise of the Jewish People*," and the responses have been outstanding—so much so that we ran out of stock and had to reprint the booklet twice so far. We are contemplating advertising our newest booklet as well ("*God Is...Our Destiny*"). We are also commencing a similar advertisement campaign in the German-speaking areas, offering our free booklet, "*Die Zehn Gebote*" ("*The Ten Commandments*").

The harvest is truly plentiful, but the laborers and co-workers are few. But this must not deter us from doing the Work of God. We pray that the hundreds and hundreds of people who recently received our booklets will respond by studying their Bibles and making necessary changes in their lives which could lead to baptism.

Sometimes we might think our labor is unproductive. We might echo what we read in Isaiah 49:4: "Then I said, 'I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and in vain...'" But let's not overlook the remainder of the verse: "... Yet surely my just reward is with the LORD, And my work with my God."

And so we know that our labor is NOT in vain (see 1 Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 14:13), and God will reward each and every one of us for our works (1 Corinthians 3:8). God has given us an open door enabling us to preach the gospel, even though we have only "a little strength" (Revelation 3:8). Sometimes, we might not always see clearly as to how it will work out, but this is alright. God understands it, and He tells us in Mark 4:26-29:

"And He said, 'The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.'"

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible makes this comment:

"... it is a mystery in nature, how the seed under the clods, where it dies before it is quickened, should spring and grow up, and bring forth fruit; and so it is... how the word of God first operates on a sinner's heart, and becomes the ingrafted word there; the time when, and much less the manner how [it] is implanted in the heart, are not known to a soul itself, and still less to the ministers of the word, who sometimes never know any thing of it; and when they do, not till some time after: this work is done secretly, and powerfully... with-

out their knowledge, though by them as instruments; so that though the sowing and planting are theirs, all the increase is God's: this may encourage attendance on the ministry of the word, and teach us to ascribe the work... entirely to the power and grace of God."

How true this is. We spread the Word through our literature and broadcasts, but we do not know, for the most part, who is being reached, and Christ works with those whom He wants to finally add to His Body... and that without our knowledge. While we may plant and water, it is GOD who gives the increase (compare 1 Corinthians 3:6-7).

Another powerful saying by God in this context can be found in Isaiah 55:10-11 where we read:

"For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."

God's Word will not be proclaimed in vain; it will not return void, empty or without fruit.

Barnes Notes on the Bible says:

"...the truth which God reveals is as much adapted to produce an effect on the hard and sterile hearts of men as the rain is on the earth... The gospel is no more preached in vain than the rain falls in vain. And though that often falls on barren rocks, or on arid sands; on extended plains where no vegetation is produced, or in the wilderness 'where no man is,' and seems to our eyes in vain, yet it is not so... It is addressed to the proud, the sensual, the avaricious, and the unbelieving, and seems to be spoken in vain, and to return void unto God. But it is not so... It leaves people without excuse... Or when long presented - apparently long in vain - it ultimately becomes successful, and sinners are at last brought to abandon their sins, and to turn unto God.

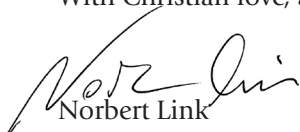
"It is indeed often rejected and despised. It falls on the ears of people apparently as the rain falls on the hard rock, and there are, so to speak, large fields where the gospel is preached as barren and unfruitful of any spiritual good as the extended desert is of vegetation, and the gospel seems to be preached to almost entire communities with as little effect as is produced when the rains fall on the deserts of Arabia, or of Africa. But there will be better and happier times. Though the gospel may not now produce all the good effects which we may desire, yet it will be ultimately successful... and the whole world shall be filled with the knowledge and the love of God."

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary adds:

"Sacred truth produces a spiritual change in the mind of men, which neither rain nor snow can make on the earth. It shall not return to the Lord without producing important effects. If we take a special view of the church, we shall find what great things God has done, and will do for it... Delivered from the wrath to come, the converted sinner finds peace in his conscience... The hope of helping in such a work should urge us to spread the gospel..."

And so, we must continue preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God in all the world as a witness which is a prerequisite for Christ's coming. In time, the effectiveness of our labor for God and mankind will become manifest. In time, some, seeing our good works of spreading God's Word, will respond by glorifying God and changing their way of life. It may take some time, headache, frustration, disillusionment and disappointment, but in the end, it will become obvious how important our labor has been. So let us continue to do with all our might what God has commissioned us to do. And our reward WILL BE great in heaven (compare Luke 6:23; Revelation 22:12).

With Christian love, and in Christ's Service,


Norbert Link