

November 20, 2014

Romans 1:2 (NASB), “*which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures...*”

There has been much in the news lately about Rob O’Neill the man who shot Osama Bin Laden. As many of you know I’m a bit of a military history junkie and I especially find the operations of the Navy Seals and other covert activities interesting. The vast amount of preparation and intelligence work that goes into these types of operations is astounding. One thing that Mr. O’Neill has said in several of his interviews is that you anticipate that something will always go wrong and there will be something that happens that you did not plan on. It is not this way however with the gospel message of Jesus Christ.

The gospel whose author is God is not an accident, and it is not an afterthought nor was it anything that was new to the New Testament. The gospel is not something that God just came up with on the fly when other strategies were not working. Verse 2 here says that the gospel was “*promised*” by God “*beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures...*”

The message of the gospel is nothing new; it was nothing new in the apostle Paul’s day and it is nothing new today either. Paul points out to his readers and to us the importance of the gospel and that it comes from the “*prophets*” which refers to the Old Testament writers in general, and from the “*holy Scriptures.*” Paul mentions the “*holy Scriptures*” in order to contrast the Scripture with the rabbinical writings of that day.

In that day most Jews read much more of the rabbinical writings than they did of the “*holy Scriptures.*” In those rabbinical writings there were hardly any mention of the gospel and most Jews looked to those writings for guidance in their lives rather than the Scripture. The Scripture was viewed more as a relic than the home of divine truth.

We face much the same issue in our churches today. Far too many Christians are unfamiliar with the Bible. Instead we have substituted Christian books and self-help books which are penned by supposedly “Christian” authors for the fount of divine truth which is Scripture. The danger in this is that what passes for Christian on the bookstore shelves often has precious little relationship with the Bible and the gospel message. Instead we settle for the writings of authors who teach a

false gospel of self-esteem and feel goodism.

Recently I mentioned to my congregation that I had been sent a list of the top 25 bestsellers in the Christian publishing business. Tragically as I read through the list I could not in good conscience recommend more than two of the titles for those in my congregation to read. We must always remember that nothing can replace the Bible as the headquarters of true Biblical truth. There are good Christian authors out there but one must be very discerning as they look for edifying material to read. As a good friend of mine recently said, “the Christian bookstore can be a very dangerous place.”

What Paul is arguing against here and in other places is the importance of Scripture over human tradition and so called human wisdom. True salvation only comes through the hearing of the word of God. It only comes from the preaching of the cross. In 1 Peter 1:10-12 Peter says this, ***“As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made a careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven – things into which angels long to look.”***

What a joy it is to know that the gospel, the good news that Jesus Christ paid the price for our sins on the cross has always been promised to us. This gospel is nothing new but rather is a fulfillment of the good news which the prophets of old preached long ago.