

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“... Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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SOME PEOPLE NEVER LEARN

by Chris Perry

The book of Second Kings begins with an injury to Ahaziah, son of Ahab and his successor as king of Israel: *“And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease”* (2 Kings 1:2). Notice that Ahaziah—the king of the ten northern tribes of God’s nation—sought advice from the false god of Ekron, Baalzebub. This request did not miss God’s attention, either, for he commanded Elijah to tell the king’s messengers, *“Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron? ...Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die”* (verses 3-4). When the messengers returned to Ahaziah with the bleak news, he sent them, along with a captain and fifty men, to Elijah. They stood at the base of a hill and cried up to Elijah: *“Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down”* (verse 9). But Elijah did not come down; instead, he cried down to them, *“If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and the fifty”* (verse 10). And so it happened to

the first captain and his fifty, as well as another captain and his fifty after them.

It is from the actions of a third fifty that a lesson becomes apparent. After hearing of the first two groups’ destruction, the captain of the third fifty approached Elijah with caution and humility: *“And the third captain...came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought him, and said unto him, O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thy sight”* (verse 13). Truly, the captain had learned something from the experience of the other two, and his knowledge paid off. Elijah was told to *“Go down with him: be not afraid of him”* (verse 15), and he did so, stating once again the fate that awaited Ahaziah.

Now take a moment to consider the potential foolishness of the third captain had he witnessed the destruction of the other two groups *yet still arrogantly proclaimed for Elijah to come down!* Imagine the recklessness of seeing 102 people consumed by fire from heaven only to follow them with the same actions and attitudes. But isn’t that—in a manner of speaking—exactly what so many have done throughout the history of

mankind? Many witness the destruction of others because of sin, they see in the lives of others the horrible consequences of straying from God, only to follow them into the same sinful acts, thoughts, and lifestyles.

Such reckless abandon is especially foolish today, considering the wealth of examples we have to heed. Paul reminded both the Romans and Corinthians (and us by extension) that they had plenty of instruction in Old Testament examples: *“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope”* (Romans 15:4); *“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come”* (1 Corinthians 10:11). We can read of Nadab and Abihu being consumed by fire for disobeying God’s implied command (Leviticus 10) and learn a lesson about God’s authority; we can read of Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice the son of promise (Genesis 22) and learn a lesson about faith. And we, as people living after the cross, have the added benefit of near-complete Biblical hindsight, a privilege no one had before Christ. Paul time and again referred to God’s scheme of redemption as a mystery (Romans 16:25; I

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Corinthians 2:7; etc.), and Peter described the lack of knowledge that plagued the Old Testament prophets as follows: *“Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow”* (1 Peter 1:10-11). To our benefit, however, Peter finishes his inspired thought by adding that *“...not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things...”* (verse 12). We can look back to the pages of Biblical history with a more complete understanding of God’s plan for saving man than ever before. Yet, still, many of us sin.

On top of the examples of Scripture is the vast number of occasions in which we see the principles of God’s word proven true in daily life. Everyday the effects of sin are clearly displayed in *real* situations with *real* people, many of whom are connected intimately to our own lives. Every funeral I have ever preached (and most gospel preachers can say the same) has ended with a plea for those present to learn from their loved one’s death that *“it is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment”* (Hebrews 9:27). But how many have walked away from a loved one’s funeral or the smoldering remains of an associate’s sin-ruined life, only to make their own feet *“swift in running to mischief”*? (Proverbs 6:18).

It is said that insanity can be practically defined as *doing the same thing and hoping to get different results*. With such a definition in mind, it is no wonder that the Bible frequently defines wisdom as the opposite: *knowledge gained from the experience of others*. Solomon sought to impart what he had learned *first hand* to others so they would not have to learn the same way; hence, his frequent entreaties for “My son” to heed his wisdom and instruction (24 times in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes). Those with spiritual wisdom need not learn “the hard way” in every situation, but can instead draw from the mistakes of others and avoid similar pitfalls.

Friend, are you doing the same things that sinful people have done throughout history, but hoping somehow to escape the

judgment of God? Won’t you employ godly wisdom and learn from the mistakes of others? Truly, some people never learn—don’t be counted among that number.

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THE SEED OF THE KINGDOM

by Bynum Black (1871-1944)

The “seed” is that which contains the life. The word of God is the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11; Matthew 13:19). Christ says, *“The words that I have spoken unto you, they are spirit, and they are life”* (John 6:63). *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”* (Matthew 4:4). Paul calls it *“the word of life”* (Philippians 2:16). *“The word of God is quick and powerful”* (Hebrews 4:12). *“The sower soweth the word”* (Mark 4:14). We are made clean through the word (John 15:3). It is called the word of salvation (Acts 13:26). The word of God shall never perish (1 Peter 2:23-25). Christ says, *“My word shall not pass away”* (Matthew 24:35). We are admonished to receive the word (James 1:21); to hold fast to the word (Titus 1:9); to comfort one another with the word (1 Thessalonians 4:18); to preach the word (2 Timothy 4:12); and to be doers of the word (James 1:22). *“Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it”* (Deuteronomy 4:2). *“Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar”*

(Proverbs 30:6). *“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book”* (Revelation 22:18).

With all this array of proof, men will tell you that God’s word is “a dead letter,” and fall to their knees and pray for God to send down converting power. They all take the word of God for a kind of a form and then supplement their own notions. Why take the word of God as a form and then say there is no power in it? Paul mentions a class of people who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof (2 Timothy 3:5). In the seventh verse he says they are *“Ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”* The 9th verse says, *“Their folly shall be evident unto all men.”* For they *“Turn away their ears from the truth and are turned aside unto fables”* (2 Timothy 4:4).

God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). Just as far as the word (the seed of the kingdom) has been preached, God has saved people. The word produces Christians, and where the word has never gone there are no Christians. If God has other means to give spiritual life, and is, as they claim, sending down converting power, why are the heathen living and dying in total ignorance and destitute of spiritual life? If He converts tens of thousands here by such a process, and does not convert the heathen, He is a respecter of persons and Paul and Peter are found liars. Oh shame!

THE BOTTOM LINE

by Lee Moses

At a typical annual shareholders’ meeting, the chairman of the board gives a lengthy welcome to the attendees, followed by a flattering introduction of himself and the board. After covering numerous points of order, he then launches into a protracted speech about the corporation’s vision for the future. Through all of this, the stockholders in attendance anxiously await more useful information: whether the customer base is being expanded, how much money the corporation spent and will spend, and how much money the corporation made and will make. They are interested in the bottom line.

It is readily acknowledged that businesses exist to make money, and need customers to do so. But trouble is always closely behind whenever principles of the world dictate how one conducts himself in religion (consider Acts 8:18-20).

Yet so many churches are intentionally market-driven rather than spiritually led. Church leaders are interested first and foremost in the same things in which corporate stockholders are interested: whether the “customer base” is being expanded (whether attendance is increasing), how much money has been spent and will be spent, and how much money has been brought in and will be brought in. Rather than seeking to emulate the New Testament pattern that led to the Divine commendation of

churches such as Thessalonica and Philadelphia (1 Thessalonians 1; Revelation 3:8-10), church leaders seek to emulate the paradigms of the financially successful, but repugnant to the Lord, Willow Creek and Saddleback Community Churches.

Christians certainly should be interested in preaching the Gospel to as many people as possible (Mark 16:15), stewardship of the Lord’s resources (Matthew 25:14-30; Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 4:2), and giving generously to the Lord (2 Corinthians 9:13). But when popularity and financial success are viewed as the church’s ultimate goal, we are not measuring success by the Lord’s standard.

Jesus said, *“My kingdom is not of this world”* (John 18:36). The church, the kingdom Christ would and did establish (Daniel 7:13-14; Matthew 16:18; Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9), is not of worldly origin or nature. Nor is it intended to serve worldly interests; as the inspired apostle Paul wrote, *“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost”* (Romans 14:17).

Christ is certainly interested in a bottom line, but His bottom line is not the same as that of the worldly-minded. While standing at the Judgment Throne we might try to be like the chairman of the board at a shareholders’ meeting. We might desire to bring up various things: Our appreciation to God for all He gave us on earth, a rundown of all our many accomplishments on the earth, and a protracted speech about what we would do on earth if given more

time. Jesus foretold, *“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?”* (Matthew 7:22). But the Judge on that day will not be interested in peripheral matters or unsubstantiated claims; He will wholly reject them and those who make them: *“And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity”* (verse 23). He will be interested only in the bottom line: *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven”* (verse 21; emphasis mine, LM). The bottom line in religion, whether individually or collectively, and the bottom line in life is: **Did you do what God said?**

SUNDRY AND DIVERS MATTERS

We have received many visitors to our website at www.fulton-countygospelnews.org since its recent overhaul. From January through May, it had received 24,271 “hits.” We regret to say that in the past few weeks we have run into some difficulties that have brought the website down. Hopefully, this problem should be resolved soon. We appreciate very much the outstanding work and tireless effort being put forth by webmaster **Brian Dixon** of Locust Bayou, Arkansas. In the meantime, if you or somebody you know would like to receive the Fulton County Gospel News electronically, we would be happy

to add you to our e-mail list. Feel free to contact us at cofcgn@centurytel.net.

Also, we would like to ask our readers that you please notify us of your address changes. We are charged a fee each time a paper has to be returned; and sometimes we are not able to update addresses, but simply have to remove subscribers who have moved or changed to “911” addresses. For those who receive FCGN via e-mail, please notify us of any changes as well, that you may keep receiving FCGN without interruption.

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GOD’S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP

- COLOSSIANS 3:17

1. **LORD’S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 11:23-34; 16: 1-2).
2. **PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; I Thessalonians 5:17-18).
3. **SINGING** - God’s word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
4. **GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; I Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
5. **PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men’s doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; I Corinthians 1:18-23).

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