

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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THINGS TEMPORARY, THINGS ETERNAL

by Joe W. Nichols

Life on this planet earth can be somewhat scary when one considers that he is attached to that which is not designed to be permanent. Recently, the public has been made aware of potential collisions with meteorites and of the scientific studies involving the sun's burning out and the earth coming to naught. Much emphasis has also been placed on the depletion of the ozone layer, the polluting of the earth and its atmosphere, and global warming. Added to all of these woes, or concerns, is the fact that the Bible teaches that all things will ultimately come to an end.

When considering the tabernacle and temple of the Old Testament, the product of the Law of Moses, all was destined to pass away in time. The materials of both the tabernacle and temple were subject to decay. Much of their furniture and adornment was plundered and destroyed by warring forces of men. All that is left today is a record of their moments of glory and the basic law, which, by God's design, no longer governs any segment of mankind.

When considering the individual human family units designed by God, the family that all are born into, they enjoy only a short tenure. In due time they disintegrate and give way to other family units. Physical families, as is evident, are not eternal. They are designed of God for a temporary arrangement and purpose.

When considering the marriage relationship, marriages are a temporary arrangement to serve God's purpose to "**replenish the earth**" (Gen. 1: 28) with offspring. Marriage is dissolved in death (Rom. 7: 1-3) and not designed for the heavenly existence (Mark 12: 25).

When considering the present heavens and earth, they are already marked for destruction. The Bible says, "**the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up,**" (2 Pet. 3: 10). Sometime in the future, the heavens and earth which now are will cease to exist.

When considering the real and consequential picture of the purpose behind all of God's creation, a bright and beautiful picture emerges. True, the heavens, the earth and all the works of men will perish, but God has willed something better for the faithful. The Patriarchs of old "desired a better country, that is a heavenly," (Heb. 11: 16). Moses looked beyond this life, "unto the recompense of reward," (Heb. 11: 26).

God is providing a transition from this temporary arrangement of attachment to things which will finally come to an end. For the faithful, He is preparing that which is spiritual and eternal and passes not away (John 14: 1-4; Heb. 10: 19-23, 12: 27-29). God has designed for us:

1. A new birth and a new family (John 3: 5; Mark 16: 16; Acts 2: 38, 47; 1 Pet. 2: 5, 9; 1 Tim. 3: 15).
2. A New heavenly city (John 14: 1-3; Rev. 22).
3. A new resurrected immortal spiritual body (1 Cor. 15: 38-54; 1 Thess. 4: 13-18).
4. A new totally spiritual and heavenly relationship with God the father and Jesus the lamb of God (Rev. 21: 22; 22: 1-5).

In view of God's plan concerning us, in passing through this life, we must be sure to make up our minds which of the two (the temporary, or the permanent) we want to be dedicated to. Many choose to love the world (1 John 2: 15-17) and cast aside any hope of life eternal with God. How can the short existence here on earth be compared to the eternal existence? It is most difficult for the finite mind to conclude. What temporary blessings of this earth are worthy in causing us to forfeit the eternal blessings of the new birth, the new body, the new family, the new city, the new home and the new heavenly spiritual relationship with deity? The decision is made here on earth when we, "**seek the things that are above [and set] our mind on things that are above,**" (Col. 3: 1-2).

When we begin to view ourselves as "**sojourners and pilgrims**" (1 Pet. 2: 11), our quest for eternal life will be noted as we, "**put to death [our] members which are upon the earth**" and put on the attributes of God's elect (Col. 3: 5-15).

Presently, this earth, as witnessed by all, is a well-defined graveyard as tombstones line the roads and highways. This earth holds no bright future for any of us. However, in our decision to become a Christian, God paints a glorious picture of a bright and beautiful existence. God's eternal purpose in saving mankind through Jesus Christ is to bring man home in a heavenly existence. Therefore, heaven is within our reach. Dear friends and brethren, let's make it our **goal**, also (2 Tim. 4: 7-8).

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WORSHIP - ACCORDING TO GOD'S WILL OR MAN'S WISHES?

by Dustin Forthun

God's second recorded conversation with man was over the vital matter of worship. God's examination of Cain and Abel shows the clarity with which God has always revealed His Will to man. That God's instructions were equally and fairly given to the worshipers of Genesis 4 is affirmed by the writer of Hebrews, who stated: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain," (Heb. 11: 4). Since faith comes by hearing God's Word (Rom. 10: 17), and since there is no respect of persons with God (Rom. 2: 11), then we can conclude that both Cain and Abel received guidelines from God concerning the worship He expected. The difference in the outcomes of the sacrifices of Cain and Abel was not due to the revelation of God's Will but the implementation of man's wishes. For whatever reason, rather than executing God's Will, Cain implemented his own wishes.

Since the days of Cain, worshippers have been following

his sinful suit by giving in to their own innovative whims. One of the most foolish mistakes that worshippers can make is to assume that God is not serious in the instructions that He has given, and that He will therefore accept those who breach His guidelines as long as they are sincere. It is, however, very popular in the religious world for people to reason that it does not matter what one believes as long as he is "sincere." Ironically, this reasoning is not as popular in other areas of life. Consider a chemistry lab where there are three bottles on a table, one labeled H₂SO₄ (sulfuric acid), another labeled HCl (hydrochloric acid), and yet another labeled H₂O (water). To the untrained eye, the contents of all three bottles appear to be the same. All are colorless liquids. A person, no matter how sincere, who drinks either the sulfuric or hydrochloric acid - thinking it to be water - will definitely be proven to be "sincerely" mistaken.

Joseph's father, Jacob, was for many years, sincerely mistaken. Because of the deceit of Joseph's brethren, Jacob believed his son to be dead (Gen. 37: 31-35). Though sincere in his belief that Joseph was devoured by a beast, Jacob was sincerely wrong - thus teaching us that it does matter what one believes, and that someone can believe a lie sincerely and suffer serious consequences. Not only does Jacob teach us that one can be sincerely wrong, but he also teaches us what the reaction of someone sincerely mistaken should be when he comes in contact with the real, undeniable evidence. When Joseph revealed himself to his father (Gen. 46: 29, 30), Jacob ceased believing that his son was dead and received the truth that he had learned. Similarly, when someone is shown the real and undeniable evidence from God's Word, correcting some sincere but mistaken belief, he should be willing to receive this instruction and worship God in spirit and in truth.

By stating "true worshippers shall

worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him," (Jn. 4: 23), Jesus points out the timeless teaching that the Father only accepts those who worship him in the proper spirit and according to the proper standard. From the account in Leviticus 10: 1,2 it is clear that God demands both the proper spirit and the proper standard from His worshippers. Nadab and Abihu, pursuing what they believed was a harmless change, definitely violated the prescribed standard. In offering "strange fire" before the Lord, Nadab and Abihu disregarded God's Will and substituted their own wishes. They learned the hard way that God is serious about the instructions that He gives to His worshippers.

Abraham, unlike Nadab and Abihu, worshipped God in the right spirit and according to the right standard. In Genesis 22, Abraham was called to worship God in a most heart-searching way by offering his only son, Isaac, as a sacrifice. If ever a man were tempted to substitute his personal wishes for God's Will, then Abraham was that man. In spite of the temptations, Abraham worshipped God in the right submissive spirit and by the right divine standard. By no means did Abraham substitute his wishes for God's Will. This father of the faithful learned that those who worship God in the right spirit and by the right standard will receive the greatest of all rewards - acceptance from God, both here and in the hereafter.

God needs more modern-day worshippers like Abraham and Abel, and not like Cain, Nadab, and Abihu. When worshippers implement their own wishes, a death awaits that is more deadly than the one which Nadab and Abihu experienced. However, when worshippers rely on the revealed Will of God, then a reward like that which Abraham received will be ours to enjoy.

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A WORD ABOUT OUR AREA WIDE GOSPEL MEETING

As advertised in our March and April issues of **FCGN**, sixteen congregations in Fulton County, Arkansas and Thayer, Missouri hosted an area wide gospel meeting April 30th through May 3rd, with B.J. Clarke of Southaven, Mississippi doing the preaching. It is great that this number of congregations could work together in unity to produce this successful effort. We had set a goal of 1,000 for Sunday evening and had 1,011! Crowds for the rest of the meeting were smaller, but also exceeded our expectations. We praise the work of all those congregations and individuals who labored so diligently to help make this a great event.

B.J. Clarke did an outstanding job in proclaiming the gospel of "Hope in Christ." He preached the same gospel that so many of you have obeyed and continued to believe. Sadly, many places do not still hold to the "old Jerusalem gospel" such as Peter first preached in Acts 2! Every point that B.J. taught was solidly grounded in Scripture. There were three baptisms during the meeting and four more the week following the meeting. We also had two precious souls restored. We also had great gospel singing led by brother Harold Webb of Swifton, Arkansas. I heard dozens and dozens of comments from brethren who were strengthened in the faith by their presence. If you will pardon the prejudice of a proud father, this was indeed a great gospel meeting and worth every effort and dollar spent to promote it in our county and area of the Ozarks.

Part of the reason I mention these things is to let you know why we advertise this event in **FCGN** every five years, but do not advertise other gospel meetings or lectureships which are sent to us to announce. We truly wish we could publicize all the worthy faithful efforts carried on by so many congregations, but the space required to do so would take up too much space in our

little paper. For that reason, the elders at Mammoth Spring do not allow any advertising of such events, except our area wide meeting every five years. Many of the contributors to our work with **FCGN** are also churches in our county and area which work so hard to make this area wide effort a success. We at Mammoth Spring do not even use the paper to advertise our own local gospel meetings and events. We hope that you who send us advertisements will understand and respect the elders' policy in this matter. - Ted J. Clarke, editor.

*Don't try to live tomorrow
Until you live today.
To live each moment as it comes
Is much the better way.
Tomorrow you may never see
But surely if you do,
The One who helped you live today
Will help tomorrow, too.*

AM I JUDGING?

by Max Patterson

In view of Jesus' statement, "Judge not that you be not judged" (Matthew 7: 1), every Christian takes the question in the title very seriously. When people want to know certain things about their salvation, or that of others, and whether they are going to heaven, there are two things a man can do.

One, a man can take the law into his own hands, pronounce one's own opinions and judgments, or two, he can give the judgment of God. It should be stated clearly that when one repeats the judgments of God, that is **not** man judging; that is God judging, and he has the right to judge. One does not pass one's own personal judgment by saying what God says.

In an article by a well-known preacher among us, he writes, "Judgment is the work of the Son of God when he sits on the great white throne in the last day! (Acts 17: 31; Rev. 20: 11-15). It is an arrogant thing for any sinner to think himself fit to pass judgment on any other sinner!" I wonder if this preacher would consider it to

be judging if we tell men and women in this world what God thinks of them. Where in the Bible does it say we are not to tell others of the judgments that God has already made. For example:

1. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16: 16).
2. "Except you repent, you shall perish." (Luke 13: 3).
3. "Those who know not God and obey not the gospel shall perish." (2 Thess. 1: 7-9).
4. "Judge righteous judgment." (John 7: 24).
5. "Be faithful to death." (Rev. 2: 10).

Does God have a right to say the above things? Do I have the right - even the responsibility - to repeat the above? And in fact any Bible teaching? If I speak as the oracles of God, I think you know the answer. How else will people know what to do to obey.

Now let me give you an example of this brother taking the law into his own hands, and thus he becomes the judge: he writes, "some will surely find mercy in their 'ignorance and unbelief' which may not be extended to others of us because of our increased opportunity to learn and do God's will."

Now **where** does the Bible teach that!?! God nowhere makes this kind of judgment. So what has happened is that this preacher, for whatever reason, has taken the law into his own hands, and has started making pronouncements that God has never made.

This is in fact what happens often in the religious world. Someone hears us in the church saying, "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved, (Mark 16:16) and then says, "Why, that's judging." No! That's God judging, and he has the right. And not only that, I have the right and responsibility to repeat that judgment. What I do not have the right to do is pronounce a judgment that nullifies and sets aside any part of the will of God for us today.

1037 West South St.
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“WE ARE THE ARMY OF THE LORD”

by Neal Pollard

All of our elders served in the military during war-time. Each of them tell so many interesting, inspiring stories about those days and times. One brother was overheard making many comparisons of the military battlefield with the spiritual battlefield on which every Christian is to fight (cf. Ephesians 6: 10ff; 1 Corinthians 9: 7; 2 Timothy 2: 3-4; et al.). His musings brought to mind the following observations.

Some of our brethren are **MIA**. They are “missing in action”. It may be regarding attending all the services of the saints, participating in the work of the church, or giving liberally of their means. When there is work to do, these brethren are not to be found. Are you “MIA”?

Some brethren are, similarly, **AWOL**. They are “away without leave”. In other words, they are conspicuously absent without “providential cause” (sickness, certain occupational situations, etc.). They are the ones to whom reference is made when the question is asked, “Where has the _____ family been lately?” When they leave town for a few weeks, no one knows. No one knows when and if they are sick. While elders and preachers may and should phone, how much easier it is when those who are hurting or ill let the church know where they are. Have you been “AWOL”?

Some brethren are **POWs**. They are “prisoners of war”. The aforementioned battle is with Satan and worldliness, but some Christians have defected to the side of that enemy. Their deeds align them with the dark forces of evil, but they have not carefully considered that “the other side” is going to “lose big” some day. The stakes are eternally high (cf. Matthew 25:46). Yet, such POWs can and must willingly leave the enemy’s camp. Others can have a part in their escape, but ultimately they have to want to leave the devil’s ranks. Are you a “POW”?

Some brethren have **Battle Fatigue**. They are getting weary in well-doing (cf. Galatians 6: 9). Perhaps they are ready to give up the fight (cf. 1 Timothy 6: 12). God wants those enlisted in His army to “war a good warfare” (cf. 1 Timothy 1: 18), but that will require “endurance” (2 Timothy 4: 6, 8). The adversary sometimes is all too clearly seen, and he looks intimidating (1 Peter 5: 8). Most of the world is on his side (Matthew 7: 13-14). Bible studies often do not end with the student obeying the gospel, fellow-soldiers can disappoint, involvement by brethren can at times seem so limited, and personal adversities can hinder. But it all can be “overcome” by “faith” (1 John 5:4). Those who endure will be rewarded in unparalleled fashion (James 1: 12).

Let us be like those who “waxed valiant in fight” (Hebrews 11: 34), aware of those things which “war against the soul” (1 Peter 2: 11). Endurance is the key to victory! Maybe you have given up, or you feel like giving up the battle. Perhaps you are simply discouraged. The battle may seem long, but the victory promises to be the sweetest ever experienced (Revelation 2: 10). Keep fighting!

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GOD’S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (1 Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; 1 Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God’s commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

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