

# 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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## WAR DECLARED!

by Ted J. Clarke

But we want peace! The thoughts of war bring terrible visions of pain, suffering, hardships, injury and death. Even the idea of a "cold war" is chilling. The tensions between adversaries make life uncertain and fearful, knowing that full scale conflict is possible at any time. With the gains that have been made in the recent easing of global cold war tensions and the signing of nuclear disarmament treaties between the Soviets and America, the last thing most of us want to hear is that we are at war on another front. Even if it is the truth, we would rather not hear it. Although it is the word of God, we would rather ignore it. Like Israel of old, "which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits," we would sometimes rather not see nor hear the truth (Isaiah 30:10). If we are forced to admit the truth of God's word regarding **Christian warfare**, we will be obligated to change our thinking and our actions to conform to His word. Those changes can be uncomfortable and very costly to our present way of life. However, as we will soon see, God has declared war and we are to be involved in it.

### Why Wars Are Fought

Wars are fought either to gain or preserve something; to conquer or defend something that we deem precious enough to die for. In war we are willing to destroy the enemy and risk personal harm, even unto death. Wars are waged by aggressors who seek to gain something by their actions, and by defenders who desire to preserve what they already possess and hold dear. Most wars are ungodly aggressions by men to subjugate peoples, lands, and earthly wealth. Some wars begin as men revolt against earthly powers which unfairly dominate and oppress them. At times an outside force will intervene to liberate others from the oppression of a cruel and inhuman government. Many

wars have been fought over supposed religious principles. The so-called "Holy Crusades" of the middle ages were launched to "Christianize" the world. Moslems believe in a "jihad" (gee-hawd), a "holy war," to propagate Islam and physically destroy its enemies.

In times past God fought for His chosen people and instructed them to fight in physical conflict against those who opposed His will. "The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is His name" (Exodus 15:3). These wars were judgments upon extremely wicked societies and served to establish the name and law of God in Israel, and as a witness to all the nations of the power and majesty of the one true God (Deuteronomy 7). By these conflicts God demonstrated His power and proved that Israel was His special people, through whom He would bless the world (Genesis 12:1-3).

### The Christian's Warfare

With the establishment of Christ's covenant and kingdom, literal physical warfare to promote God and His will are no longer proper. In John 18:36, Jesus recognized the need of earthly kingdoms to defend themselves, but He denied that physical combat was to be waged as part of His New Covenant system. He said, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (here). God's kingdom in Christ is neither expanded nor defended by literal swords, guns and other physical armaments. Even when God commanded fleshly war in His cause, He warned Israel not to trust in such things, but to remember that He was the power behind their every victory (Psalm 20:7; Isaiah 31:1).

However, we must not be deceived into thinking that, because we are not

to wage fleshly war against enemies of God's truth and righteousness, therefore there is no war in which we are to be engaged! The life of our Lord is an example of the daily battles each Christian must fight to uphold God's will and oppose error of every kind. Read Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and note the presence of conflict in nearly every event in Christ's life. The fact that Jesus says that we also have a cross to bear implies similar battles in our lives, if we follow Him (Luke 9:22-26; John 15:18-20). **God has declared war against every kind of ungodliness and religious error and every Christian is to be a soldier in the Lord's army!**

The apostle Paul illustrates this spiritual warfare which every Christian is obligated to wage. He points out, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal...) [fleshly] (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). In Ephesians 6:10-18, Paul notes that our weapon is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (verse 17). This is because "we wrestle not against flesh and blood," but against "spiritual wickedness" in the various areas of life (verse 12). Verses 11-17 describe the Christian's armour, which is from the Lord, enabling us to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might" and to take a continuing "stand against the wiles of the devil." The armour of God protects us from the assaults of Satan and his soldiers, while the weapon of God's choice, His word, is given for defense and attack.

### Our Weapon, God's Word

Holding fast to God's word makes it impossible for Satan to destroy our faith. The Devil knows the power of God's word to produce and preserve faith. Otherwise, he would not try so hard to destroy it. He called God's word into

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question with Eve, asking, "Hath God said?" and then denied that God's word was truthful (Genesis 3:1-5). Matthew 13:15; Mark 4:15 and Luke 8:12 all record the Devil's anxious activity to remove the seed of God's word from the hearts of men, "lest they should believe and be saved (Luke 8:12). In Matthew 4:1-10 and Luke 4:1-13, Satan sought to pervert God's word, quoting it in tempting Jesus. The Lord corrected the Devil's abuse of Scripture and upheld the power of the word to defeat the Accuser (Matthew 4:5-7). Without "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," one does not have **"the whole armour of God"** and you will not be able to "stand against the wiles of the devil," let alone go forward in attacking "spiritual wickedness" (Ephesians 6:11, 17). Think about it! What is a soldier without a weapon? Defenseless to protect himself and others! Powerless to go on the offensive! **Mark it down - anyone who tries to take away your weapon of God's word, or tries to dull its edge and blunt its point, is an enemy of God and an agent for Satan!**

**Christians Must Fight**

Someone has rightly said that the only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for the good to do nothing at all. Many Christians are not even aware of the terrible conflicts that are being waged against the Lord, His church and the Scriptures. Others who know about the battles being fought either refuse to be involved or are indifferent to them. Such people are "deserters" from the Lord's army. Those who are on the firing line have seen the

damage inflicted by enemy fire - vital truths are being compromised or destroyed, precious souls are being led astray or lost, and frequently some have encouraged surrender to religious errors which we have opposed and defeated many times in the past.

**Our most dangerous enemies have become those in the church who want to turn it into nothing more than another man-made denomination!** Distinctive Biblical truths such as baptism being essential to salvation, purity of worship from human innovations such as instrumental music, the Scriptures as our only standard of authority in religious matters and other such things are being attacked by some well known educators and preachers among us. In some areas these men seem to be gaining a considerable following with their cries for "change in the church" and with smooth and fair speeches which have deceived many who are not alert to the dangers involved.

Faithful Christians cannot sit idly by and give ground inch by inch to these aggressors who seek to steal and subvert "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3 - ASV). When "false brethren" came in "unawares" to bring the early church into bondage to man-made teaching, Paul said, "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (Galatians 2:4-5). We must not give in to such men today or ever!

Paul told Timothy to "war a good warfare... fight the good fight of faith... until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Timothy 1:18; 6:12-14). The fact that Paul mentions a "good" warfare and fight implies that one could be fighting a "bad" war. Those who fight for things which are contrary to what Christ and Paul fought for are waging a "bad" war. One must also be careful not to fight for a "good" cause in a "bad" way. Remember, we are not fighting to destroy people but wicked principles which people hold. The "good fight" saves souls.

Timothy was also told to be willing to "suffer hardship... as a soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3-4). Surely, no one truly enjoys war and conflict, physical or spiritual, but we have to be willing to endure such as good soldiers in service to Christ. Being involved in this "war" also means that "no man that warreth entangleth himself in the affairs of this life; that he may please Him who has

chosen him to be a soldier" (verse 4). In other words, our involvement in fighting in this war against evil and error is to take **top priority** over "the affairs of this life." Defending and preserving God's way is more important than getting along with everybody or worrying about what others think of us. Fighting and warring mean that we will hurt some and possibly be hurt by others. War is heart-breaking, gut-wrenching, and generally difficult to deal with. One of the New Testament words for fighting is the word from which we get our English words "agony" and "agonizing." But again, we must be willing to suffer such agony and to stand on the Lord's side, even against family, brethren and friends (cf. Exodus 32:26-28; Matthew 10:34-39; Luke 14:26-33).

There is no such thing such as God or God's soldiers calling for a truce with falsehood and ungodliness. We are to "abhor that which is evil" and "hate every false way" (Romans 12:9; Psalm 119:104). Truth and righteousness cannot abide in peaceful coexistence with sin and error. Those who think otherwise are only fooling themselves. Falsehood and evil will always try to overcome truth and goodness (1 Corinthians 15:33). We are to **oppose and expose** all that stands in opposition to God (2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Ephesians 5:11). This is a war which will not end until Christ returns to "put all enemies under His feet" (1 Corinthians 15:25). Victory is assured, through Christ, according to Revelation 19, but only those who have sided with Christ will share in that victory. The only real "peace" we can have in this life does not come from being indifferent to the battles now raging. Rather, **true peace can only come from fighting on God's side, knowing that the suffering for right in this life's battles will be rewarded with an eternal peace in heaven** (Romans 8:18). Truth and error will both be in this world till Jesus comes, but it cannot be a "peaceful coexistence." Truth must always be at war with error.

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**A CLARIFICATION**

In last month's issue (December 1992) on page one, column two, the last line of the first paragraph should read: "...how many in the world love and honor the God/Man who died for them?" A typographical error had Jesus as "... the Godly Man who died for them?" Jesus was more than a Godly Man. He was fully God and also fully Man, thus He was the "God/Man." We apologize to any readers who may have been concerned that we were teaching that Jesus was only a Godly Man. - Editor.

**A NOTABLE EXCEPTION**

It has been the policy of the **Fulton County Gospel News** for some time not to include any kind of advertising in this paper. This includes good works of sister churches, special events and general news items. We usually do not even include our own gospel meetings. Neither have we carried advertisements regarding books or cassette tapes for sale. Once we begin carrying such news items or advertising, it is difficult to limit the space given to such matters and soon something must be left out or there would be no space for articles on the gospel of Christ. Also, some may feel they have been slighted if their event or ad doesn't get as much space as another. This paper does not exist to make money for itself or others through the sale of books, tapes, etc. The advertisement on this page is "a notable exception" to the policy stated above. Our policy still stands and any further exceptions to it will be rare.

However, the fine elders of the Lord's church in Mammoth Spring, Arkansas feel very strongly about some problems in the church in general and believe that brethren on a wide basis need to know of the matters set forth by Brother Curtis A. Cates in the booklet advertised below. Since our paper goes to many who are not Christians, we do not usually discuss specific church problems. This issue of the **FCGN** is also something of an exception to that general practice. While there is no subject of Biblical teaching or religious error that we will not deal with, we do not always or even usually point out specific congregations or individuals involved. It is scriptural to note and mark such men (cf. 1 Timothy 1:20; 2 Timothy 1:15; 2:17; 4:10, 14). Their false teaching will lead many astray. We commend Brother Cates' booklet to you for further study on these issues which presently trouble much of the church. Curtis Cates has a brilliant mind and is an excellent teacher of God's word. You will be shocked to hear what some men are teaching, but thankful that we have men in the Lord's church such as Brother Cates who can so ably refute their false teaching. He is a leader and trainer of men to fight in the war against error and sin. May God increase his number and strengthen all of us to "fight the good fight."

Ted J. Clarke, Editor  
**Fulton County Gospel News**

**THE SECOND INCARNATION:  
A PAMPHLET FOR APOSTASY**  
By Curtis A. Cates; Forward by Garland Elkins

This review of the "Second Incarnation" by Curtis A. Cates is reminiscent of the "Review of Jeter" by Moses E. Lard in its penetrating analyses and thoroughness of exposure of the absurd tenets of this deliberate attempt to lead the saints astray. It is a total exposure the doctrines the "Second Incarnation" advances. I commend it unreservedly.

**Guy N. Woods**

*The Second Incarnation* is one of the most dangerous books penned in this century. It is inundated with errors that are crucial and critical. Curtis A. Cates did his homework in thorough fashion before his review of this monumental monstrosity. His refutation of the Shelly-Harris new theology is done with painstaking preciseness and a sharpness of Scriptural logic that leaves no stone unturned. Brother Cates is a master in unmasking the shallow sophistry of these two Pied Pipers who seek to change the Lord's unchanging church into a changed Barthian organism that fits modern man's current cultural desires. I commend the Herculean task that he has done with consummate skill. To him we owe a continuing debt.

**Robert R. Taylor, Jr.**

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**Comments of Others -**

I have just finished reading the very rich and rewarding material by Curtis A. Cates, director of the Memphis School of Preaching. This very vital research study was made relative to whether or not the "Second Incarnation" and "Pilgrim Church" concepts were to be "models for the church."

If you desire to read a most enlightening and devastating blow to the book, *The Second Incarnation* by brethren Shelly and Harris, then this is the material you absolutely must read. Just briefly, here are a few reasons why:

1. It is tremendously documented, with over 220 quotes or references to their teaching.
2. Many piercing, potent and powerful questions are asked as Brother Cates compares their teaching against a look into the Word of God, quoting or referring to it over 230 times.
3. If you desire to know how much these young men in their own philosophy have been influenced by such thinkers (do I dare say theologians?) as Hans Kung, Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Kierkegaard, and Schliermacher, as well as others, this then is your material.
4. If you want a study, in a few pages, examining some sixteen major thoughts, such as: "You Must Change the Way You Look at the Bible," "You Must Redefine Doctrine," "You Must Reject the New Testament Pattern," "You Must Think of the Lord's Body as Flawed, Insufficient," "You Must Accept 'Unity in Diversity'," "You Must Not Think the Lord's Church Can Be Identified," "You Must Confess Your Sins to Fellow Christians and Absolve Their Sins," "You Must Accept the Direct Leading and Influence of the Holy Spirit," etc., then this most valuable material is what you need.

This material by Brother Cates will "stand the test" and will also show their material cannot "stand the test."

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**Battle Fatigue**

It may be that some among us, who are promoting changes in the church which surrender to religious error, are suffering from battle fatigue. There are at least a few of these men who were valiant soldiers for the truth in years past. They held off the onslaughts of false teaching against the truth with the sword of God's word and they used that same weapon to attack and destroy denominational teaching. Sadly, and in spite of their denials of such, these men have laid aside the sword of the Spirit with its power and are now quoting the Scriptures like the Devil, attempting to subvert the faith and compromise its teachings. These men cannot even answer their own past defense of the truths which they now deny. In fact, they refuse to try to defend their present teachings

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for the most part, saying that they have no need to do so. Paul was set for the defense of what he preached, why not these brethren? (Philippians 1:17) Peter said we ought to be ready to give an answer for our hope (1 Peter 3:15). Why not these men? It is sad to see such capable men surrender, giving up the battle for truth and going over to the side of error. They gave up their abilities to defend their teachings when they gave up teaching what the Scriptures teach! Do they know that? Is that why they refuse to defend their teaching?

There are thousands of others in the Lord's church who likewise seem to be "tired of fighting" and ready to quit the war altogether or start fighting for the other side, which is to really follow Satan. What has caused this phenomenon of once zealous leaders and once faithful Christians giving up the fight? Some have likely grown weary of the constant need to fight for truth and right on every side. True Christianity is a minority surrounded by multitudes of enemies and thus, the war is unending in this life. Those who give up the battle lack the quality of endurance (steadfastness) which is spoken of so many times in Scripture. Patience is another word for it (2 Peter 1:6; Hebrews 10:36). Lack of patience really implies a lack of faith in God and His word, that those who keep on fighting will truly be the only ones who please God and receive the promise of eternal life. While the responsibilities of leadership in battle are demanding, we cannot abandon the truth which we are to defend in order to have an easier time of it.

Perhaps others have seen real or imagined harm done to others, or they may have experienced personal injury as a result of being involved in the battle. This is no justification to quit fighting, especially when we remember what the Lord endured in our place (Matthew 26 & 27). Remember also Paul's great sufferings for the Lord (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). We are also reminded that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). This is a real war, even though it is spiritual in nature, and there are going to be casualties. Of course, some refuse to fight because they think that it is best to "go along" (even with error) in order to "get along." All such thinking is a part of the "wiles of the devil."

Yes, the war is long. Yes, we can and

do get weary. But, **no, we cannot quit the fight and surrender to the Devil!** We must not lose sight of the fact that we are fighting for God's way and His word. Neither can we surrender the precious ground gained through the American Restoration Movement, which we have built upon and still defend as Biblical. Satan would love to have the Lord's church to look at itself as just another religious group among the hundreds that claim to be of Christ. He would love to have us lose our distinctiveness as the one essential body of Christ, striving to understand and apply the Scriptures to our lives in the worship and service to God and service to our fellowman. The Devil would love to disarm us, taking away the word of God, which is the only weapon we have to defeat him and his ways. What we have in Christ and His church is too precious to surrender. It must be defended! What we gain in converting souls to Christ and His word is too valuable to concede to Satan. We must continue to be on the offensive against unbelief and religious error.

#### Conclusion

Fellow Christian, the Lord is at war and commands His army in the battle. Are you on active duty, or are you a "goldbrick" or a deserter? May we never lose sight of the importance to fight for all truth which God has revealed to us in His word (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3; Jude 3). Do not yield to those who strive to minimize some of those truths. They seek to dull your sword and make you ineffective as a fighter for truth. Hold fast God's word and we can gain the victory.

We already know the outcome of the war. The book of Revelation and other passages make plain that God wins and that only those on His side share in the victory celebration in heaven. As Jesus did, and as Paul did in imitation of the Lord, so we must all do. Till the end of the war or till we fall in battle, we must keep on fighting the good fight, we must keep on the course till it is finished and we must certainly keep the faith of our Lord till He comes. Only then will we wear our crowns of righteousness as victors through Christ (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

"Soldiers of Christ arise, and put your armour on." We are at war!

*Some people cannot see their own mistakes because they are blinded by the light of their own halo.*

#### 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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