

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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Is The Church Important?

by Owen D. Olbricht

Attitudes over the years have changed toward the church. During some periods of history the church was the important central focus of a community, but at other times the church has been considered a detriment to the community. Some have thought that the church is not important to God while others have felt that the church is everything to God.

People have trouble keeping a balanced prospective concerning religious matters. In some circles the Holy Spirit receives all the attention, in others God is central, in others Jesus is everything, in others the church is most important, and on and on with the varying degrees of emphasis in different religious groups.

Jesus Most Important!

For the Christian Jesus is most important. He is the "...way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). "...God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9). "And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people" (Acts 3:23).

Statements of this kind could be multiplied concerning the importance of Jesus to our lives. Anyone who has read the New Testament should realize the importance it places on Jesus and His teaching.

What About the Church?

If Jesus is so important, does that not relegate the church to the background and Jesus to the foreground? In a way it does; however, those who put Jesus in the foreground should also take on His mind and attitudes. The question is not, "Is Jesus important?" That goes without question for the believer in Jesus. The question should be, "What is Jesus' attitude toward the church?" If the church

is not important to Jesus, then it should not be important to the one who believes in Jesus; however, if the church is important to Jesus, then those who believe in Him should accept His values and, because of the same mind-set as His, accept the importance of the church.

Jesus and the Church

According to the New Testament, Jesus cannot be separated from the church and the church cannot be separated from Jesus, because its existence depends on its relationship with Jesus.

1. The church owes its existence to Jesus. The church is the result of the work of Jesus. He stated, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). Not only did He build the church but the stability and sure nature of the church rests on Jesus. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11).

The formula is quite simple: No Jesus, no church. Jesus exists; therefore the church exists. The church came into existence by Him and continues to exist because of Him. Those who speak against the church speak against the work of Jesus.

2. The church was purchased with Jesus' blood (Acts 20:28). This must be an indication of the importance Jesus places on the church. If the church is unimportant, then why did Jesus die for it? Jesus' death for the church must indicate the greatness of His love for the church. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). The church is so important to Jesus that He gave His life for it (Eph. 5:25).

3. The church is the beloved bride of Jesus. A man who loves his wife realizes the importance of his wife to him. In the same way a man is to love his wife, Jesus loves the church (Eph. 5:25).

Those who question the importance of the church to Jesus question both His love and also His death, for both of these are wrapped up in the church. Jesus has died for no other institution and has not revealed His love for any other organization on earth. The church must be special to Jesus.

4. Jesus cleansed the church so that He could present it to Himself without spot or blemish. The atoning work of Jesus (Col. 1:22) was for the church (Eph. 5:23-25). The New Testament offers no promise that His death extends to any but those who are in His church. It does, however, make it clear that the church will benefit from the blood He shed on the cross (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25).

5. The church is sustained by Jesus. The church is protected by Jesus so that even the Hadean world cannot open its gates and swallow up the church (Matt. 16:18). Death cannot prevail against the church. The victory over death for the church has been won by Jesus (1 Cor. 15:55-57).

Conclusion

When we make the light of the church or do not give it the importance due it, we make light of Jesus and His work. If we love what Jesus loves and serve what Jesus serves, we will love the church and seek its good. The church is the temple of God, where Jesus and God dwell (1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:20-22). "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Cor. 3:17).

The church is so important to Jesus He will destroy those who seek to destroy it. Saul of Tarsus, in persecuting the church (Acts 8:1), was persecuting Jesus (Acts 9:4). The church is so much a part of Jesus that those who persecute the church persecute Jesus. It must also follow that those who speak against the church and do not respect it are also speaking against Jesus and are showing Him disrespect.

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The church is not as important as Jesus; however, the church is important because of Jesus' relationship to it and because of its relationship to Him. We should place the same importance on the church Jesus placed on it. Those who do this are true followers of Jesus.

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God will mend a broken heart if we give Him all the pieces.

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THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

by Ted J. Clarke

Perhaps one of the most difficult balances to measure in life is how to live in the world, but not be of the world. There is so much in the world that God has created or given to us through the advancement of civilization that is good — in and of itself. There is also a great deal that man has done to corrupt God's gifts and to place evil and temptation in our paths. Even the things that are good can become evil if they are abused and perverted. How can the Christian and church of our Lord strike a balance of being "salt" and "light" to the world without being overcome by the things that are in the world?

First of all, we know that it is possible because our Lord commanded it (Matthew 5:13-16; 28:18-20). Second, we have the example of the Life of Christ. He is the epitome of living in the world and yet being everything that God wanted Him to be (1 Peter 2:21). One key is found in the two great commandments: [1] loving the Father with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength, or always putting God first (Mark 12:30; Matthew 6:33). If we are always aware of the danger of compromising our faith and consciously seeking to put God first, thinking about what He would have us to do, it isn't likely that the world will have much success in distracting us. We cannot be what God wants us to be in the world by becoming like the world (John 15:18-25; 17:14-19). [2] The second commandment of loving others as ourselves is likewise a guard against becoming a worldly person. Christians are to set the example, to be different and to draw others to see the love of God and happiness of being a Christian! Love for others always seeks what is best for them (Mark 12:31; Romans 13:8-10). What is best for all of mankind is a proper relationship with God! Man is sinful and lost, but the way of salvation is through Christ (Romans 3:9,10,23; 6:23; 8:1). Trying to save others will keep us from doing the things that cause the world to be lost.

Israel, also known in the Old Testament as Ephraim, did not learn how to be children of God in the world without joining in worldly things. The prophet Hosea said, "Ephraim has mixed himself among the peoples; Ephraim is a cake unturned. Aliens have devoured his strength, but he does not know it"

(Hosea 7:8-9). Unless we stand fast in the word of God, growing and maintaining our knowledge of His will for us, we are doomed to have our strength devoured by those in the world. However, if we keep God's word as our light and guide in all things pertaining to our lives, we will keep separate from the world and remain in God's grace (Acts 20:32; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Jude 3; 1 John 2:15-17; 1 Peter 2:1-2, 11-12). **We must be the ones who influence the world!**

Man must make a clean break from the world if he is to have a close tie with Heaven.

WHY SHOULD THE YOUTH REMEMBER THEIR CREATOR?

by Marvin Rickett

The wise man admonishes us, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them" (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Every one should remember his Creator all of his days. We should all remember our Creator in the sense that we hear Him, obey Him and serve Him. Why is it, then, that the youth are singled out in this passage to remember their Creator?

1) Some youths never reach mature adulthood. There is no guarantee that every person will be granted his "three score and ten" years (Psalm 90:10). The young die, too. There are accidents, cancer, and other diseases that take away the lives of the young as well as those older. Read the obituary column of the local newspaper. There will be listed regularly the deaths of people in their teens, 20s, 30s. Admittedly, the list of those in their 60s, 70s, and 80s will be the greater portion. But there is a significant number who will never live to be 60 or 70. The youth need to be prepared to meet the Lord in Judgment. We all need to be prepared at all times to meet the Lord in Judgment.

2) Youth should remember their Creator because of the good service they can render to God while they are young. It is a mistake to believe that only mature persons can be of much service to God. The youth have more vigor, zeal and strength that can be useful in serving God. "The glory of young men is their strength:

and the beauty of old men is the grey head" (Proverb 20:29). The assets of youth are often expended on worldliness and sin; and then after youth is gone, they may try to give the Lord the remnants. This should not be. The song "Give of your best to the Master", says, "give of the strength of your youth." Paul told Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). In our youth-oriented culture, the Christian youth can have a great deal of influence for good.

3) Youth should remember their Creator because it is in youth where life's habits are formed. How much better is it to form good habits that will serve a person for life, rather than form evil habits that will have to be broken later if one is to serve God. The good habits of living a clean, self-disciplined life, worshiping God and being loyal to His church, attending regularly to spiritual duties, formed early in life and kept in practice prepares a person for the rest of his years on earth. Change is hard. But if a person spent his youth in riotous living, he must make a drastic change if he hopes to obtain eternal life. Some have become so hardened that they are simply unable, or unwilling, to make the changes necessary to be saved. How much better it would have been if they had remembered their Creator in the days of their youth!

4) Youth should remember their Creator so there will be no regrets in the older years. They may be able to make the change from unrighteous to righteous living, but old sins and rash deeds leave scars. The sins can be forgiven but some of the consequences of youthful indiscretions can never be erased. The damage can never be fully repaired. Many of the mature and older regret the wasted years they served the devil when they could have been serving the Lord. If one lives long enough, the bad days will come and the years will draw near when the pleasures of youthful vigor will give place to the pangs of aging. It is then that the person who remembered his Creator in his youthful days will have no regrets.

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A man is tallest when he stoops to help another.

HEAVEN-CENTERED THINKING

by B. J. Clarke

Oh, how we need more heaven-centered minds! Many have forgotten that this world is not our home and that we're just passing through. Carnal-mindedness is rampaging across our land and it has even filtered into the Lord's body. So many are so wrapped up in the cares and affairs of this life that they have made little or no preparation for the next life.

The Holy Scriptures constantly emphasize the need for heaven-centered thinking and living. Paul said, "*Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth (Col. 3:1,2).*" The Colossians needed to revamp their thinking to be more heaven-centered rather than earth-centered. A similar admonition fell from the lips of our Lord in his Mount Olivet discourse, "*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through and steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:19-21).*"

In spite of the plain declaration of the preceding passages, a mad dash to accumulate earthly treasures has relegated laying up heavenly treasures to a place of secondary importance. When will we ever realize the futility of setting our affections upon a place that is temporal in nature? Peter reminded his readers of the certainty of Christ's coming and the attendant consequences. When the day of the Lord comes, the heavens will pass away with a great noise, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and all of its works will be burned up (2 Pet. 3:10). Peter then asked a question that we would do well to soberly examine. He said, "*Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness...? (2 Pet. 3:11).*" In other words, since the earth and all within it is going to someday be annihilated, should you be earth centered or heaven-centered in your thinking?

Oh, how we need to emulate and imitate the heaven-centered thinking of the heroes of faith chronicled in Hebrews 11.

They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth (Heb. 11:13). They desired a better country, that is, an heavenly country (Heb. 11:16). They realized that here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come (Heb. 13:14). Abraham looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10). It was heaven-centered thinking that prompted Moses to choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season (Heb. 11:25). Heaven-centered thinking explains why some were tortured, not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection (Heb. 11:35ff).

Likewise, heaven-centered thinking will enable us to remember to love not the world, neither the things that are in the world (1 John 2:15). Let us never forget that "*the world passeth away and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (1 John 2:17).*"

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HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES

by Shan Jackson

In Ephesians 5:25-33 the apostle Paul gives detailed instruction to Christian Husbands. Among other things he says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church." Brethren, this is not a suggestion made by a confirmed bachelor. This is not a multiple choice opportunity or an "exception to the rule" proposition. This is a mandate of God. However, "Husbands, love your wives" doesn't make the husband "boss" any more than "Wives submit to your own husbands" makes them inferior. Contained in these four simple words we find the kind of love, compassion, and tenderness that must be contained in the husband's make up and demeanor.

Let me paraphrase Ephesians 5:25-33 and see what I mean. God says, "Husbands, go all out in your love for your wives. Hold nothing back just like Jesus held nothing back in His love for the church. Like Jesus gave, and gave, and gave, you husbands also need to give, and give, and give. And just like everything He said and did was designed to bring out the best in the church, you make sure your actions and words bring out the best in your wife. In fact, think of it this way. Just like you love and

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care for your physical body by clothing it, and washing it, and feeding it, you also need to take care of your wife who is "one" with you. That's why you left the comforts of your father and mother's home, so that you can make a home with your wife. It's not like two people living in one house, it's one home comprised of two people. Husbands, treat your wife the way Christ treats His church. In that way you get the best picture of how much love is really worth."

Brethren, Paul's words concerning a husband, if the husband accepts them, show that a Christian husband takes Christ seriously. When he takes Christ seriously he will use his God-given position as head of the home to tenderly care for his wife.

It takes commitment to be a loving leader. Regardless of whether we are talking about leading society, a nation, the church, or the home. One reason marriages stumble from time to time, and a reason marriages fail from time to time, is because of a temporary or permanent lack of commitment. What Paul is talking about in Ephesians 5 is commitment. If husbands are committed to their wives, as Christ was committed to the church, marriages will last and be as God would have them be. Let us all pray that the Lord will help us all.

Brethren, if Christ truly is the "head of the church" (Eph. 1:22), then I must love my wife. If Christ is truly the "Son of God" (John 3:16), then I must love my wife. If He is the "Savior of the body," the "Messiah," the "Christ," the "Lord of lords;" then I must love my wife. I can't accept Him as those, unless I love my wife. Let us "love our wives" and thus show respect for Christ and His word.

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WHAT ABOUT LIVING TOGETHER BEFORE MARRIAGE?

by Max Patterson

We could answer this question very quickly and easily from the Bible. However, permit me to respond to this in a different way before telling what the Bible says.

In 1983, 13 years ago, Newsweek magazine reported that only 16% of college students felt it was bad "for a man

and woman to live together before Marriage." 61% said it would be "helpful."

In 1988, *Psychology Today* revealed the results of a study of this phenomenon: "Yale University sociologist Neil Bennett and colleagues found that cohabiting women were 80% more likely to separate or divorce than were women who had not lived with their spouses before marriage."

In 1989, *The National Survey of Families and Households* reported a similar response: "Unions begun by cohabitation are almost twice as likely to dissolve within 10 years compared to all first marriages: 75 percent to 30 percent."

There have now been several other studies that indicate the same thing. Does it surprise you that God's way is still the best way? When real commitment, love and responsibility as one has in a true marriage is not present in a relationship, it is almost certainly doomed to destruction. When marriage takes place there is not only the legal and public pronouncement, but there is also the commitment and promise, "till death do us part."

When one thinks about it carefully, "living together" is an act of selfishness. It is giving in to the lusts of the flesh. It is degrading each other because we are using each other as if we were an object, a "thing." Marriage, on the other hand, is commitment and selflessness (putting the other first).

Obviously, the Scriptures teach that fornication is a sin - something that hurts God, the church, and family. Marriage is a divine institution where a man leaves father and mother and is joined to his wife and the two become one. They are no longer two but one. And what God has joined together, let no man put asunder (separate or divorce). Mt. 19:4-6.

Our world would be better off listening to God!

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No wonder life gets to be so dull with just a steady diet of what the world has to offer. Build up your faith, brighten up your living. Read a portion of the Word every day.

Praise is like perfume - it is just fine as long as we don't swallow it.


GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP - COLOSSIANS 3:17

- 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; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; 16:1-2).
- PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18).
- 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.
- GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
- 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; 1 Corinthians 1:18-23).

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