

# 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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## TAKE A STAND!

by Ted J. Clarke

### INTRODUCTION

In 1 Kings 18, God's prophet, Elijah, came to a confrontation with Ahab, King of Israel, and his prophets. Ahab and his prophets were worshipers of the pagan god, Baal. The children of Israel were supposed to be servants of the one true God (Deuteronomy 5: 6,7), but they had been trying to serve God a little and Baal a little. Israel did not see their service to God as an exclusive matter. It was to this attitude that Elijah addressed himself, saying,

*“How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.” (1 Kings 18: 21).*

No doubt the lack of response was very disappointing to both God and Elijah. There will always be some people who have to check and see which way the wind is blowing before they choose a side. They do not want to pick a loser or be stuck with an unpopular position. Perhaps a majority of those who resist taking a side do so because they do not want to be involved in a confrontation regarding their position. Joshua had told Israel in his farewell address that they had to make choices regarding their religious preferences, and he told them that he had chosen the Lord God who delivered them from Egyptian bondage (Joshua 24:14,15). Israel had initially chosen to follow God, but they did not like the separation which exclusive service to God demanded and tried to serve other religious interests. Elijah insisted that they make a choice, implying that they could not serve both God and Baal, but at this point the people were too cowardly to choose. Israel really did make a choice **not** to serve God alone. Because of their spiritual adultery, God sent them

into Assyrian captivity (2 Kings 17: 1-18). Israel's failure to choose to serve God exclusively meant that they chose to reject the covenant which God had made with them. Jesus revealed the consequences of such indecision when he taught, “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad” (Matthew 12:30).

### A PRESENT PROBLEM

The world is full of religious people like those Israelites in 1 Kings 18. There will always be the normal amount of people-pleasers, those who are concerned about being popular. We will always have people who are professing a general type of religion, who do not know enough about the Bible to justify their faith. There is also an ample supply of those today who will not make a decision because they do not want to be confronted regarding that decision. But Jesus said that all such people who refuse to make a decision to stand with him **are against him!** (cf. Matthew 12:30). You cannot straddle the gospel fence. Either you are standing with Jesus on His side, or you are against Him. You may wish that it were otherwise, but Christ's words are clear enough on this matter.

A number of times during his personal ministry the Lord addressed the matter of worrying more about what men think of us than what God thinks of us. In John 5:44 he asked, “How can ye believe, which receive honor of one another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?” When we worry about what others think, rather than what God thinks, it is a hindrance to our faith. The apostle John later speaks in his gospel of those Jews who believed on Jesus but would not confess their faith and take a stand with Christ. Why did they refuse to take the side of Jesus?

John explains, “For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:42,43). These men may not have felt that they really denied Jesus, but a refusal to confess their faith was a statement of opposition. “He that is not with me is against me . . .”

The great apostle Paul also spoke of these matters in his epistles. “For do I now persuade (seek the favor of - American Standard Version) men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Galatians 1:10). In 1 Thessalonians 2:4 he said, “. . . we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.” Paul was always content to stand with the Lord, regardless of what the rest of the world thought and no matter how he was treated by others (cf. 2 Corinthians 11: 23-28). Both the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul went to their deaths because they took their stand with God and His holy word. When Jesus tells us to take up our crosses and follow Him daily, can we truly be satisfied with doing any less (Luke 9:23)? When Paul pleads with us to follow him, even as he followed Christ, does he not mean at the cost of our lives (1 Corinthians 11:1)? Can we worry about what men think about our master's commands? Not if we want to please the Lord!

### STANDING WITH CHRIST

One cannot take a stand with the Lord unless that person is willing to confront others and be confronted. Read Matthew, chapters 21 through 23, and note the different confrontations which the Lord experienced in those events. He confronted the moneychangers in the temple; the chief priests and elders confronted Him regarding His authority and the Lord countered them with His own questions; both the Pharisees and Sadducees questioned Him and He gladly met their challenges; and finally, the scribes and Pharisees received some of the strongest

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**FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS**P.O. Box 251  
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TED J. CLARKE ..... EDITOR  
Phone ..... (870) 625-3217  
Fax ..... (870) 625-3137  
E-Mail ..... tedjc@centurytel.net

**Website**[www.fultoncountygospelnews.org](http://www.fultoncountygospelnews.org)

Joseph Chase - Webmaster

E-mail: chasejoseph@yahoo.com

challenges that our Lord ever uttered. Did Christ love these people? Indeed, He was going to die for them as well as for you and me (John 3:16). It was His love that compelled Him to confront these men in religious and moral error and try to get them to stand with Him. We may also note in Acts, chapters 17 through 19, the apostle Paul was busily confronting those who needed to take a stand with the Lord. Paul was again imitating Jesus, just as he tells us to do.

First Peter 3:15 commands us to be ready to answer for the stand that we take. Those who fear to be questioned will not take a stand. Those who stand with the Lord never need to fear (Hebrews 13:5,6)! Brethren, we have no need to be ashamed about our faith, **if we are standing with the Lord!** There is no need to apologize for insisting that one must be baptized (immersed in water) in order to be saved. Jesus said it in Mark 16:16 and we are doing nothing more than standing with him when we repeat it. One does not need to hang one's head when speaking out against the use of instrumental

music in Christian worship. There is no Bible authority for it and we cannot do in the name of (authority of) Christ. Why be embarrassed about such things? If Christ does not authorize it, we are standing with Him when we reject it. Why cringe when someone asks whether we believe that there are saved people in the denominations? Jesus said that He would build His church and Paul says that there is one body (church - Matthew 16:18, Ephesians 4:4). Furthermore, if salvation is in Christ (2 Timothy 2:10) and Jesus is the Saviour of His body (which is the church), how can one be saved outside of Christ's church (Ephesians 5:23)?

It is not unloving of us to take a stand, as long as we speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). When we fail to take a stand on God's word, we neither love God nor our fellowman, because the gospel is the only hope of salvation (Romans 1:16). All of us want to be popular or well liked. But, we must desire to be popular with God, rather than to sacrifice doing God's will in order to be popular with men. In Ephesians 6:10-17 the apostle Paul encourages us to "put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to **stand** against the wiles of the devil." The weapon which will enable us to stand is the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. The battle for truth is a never ending one. We may become tired and seek for rest, but we can never surrender nor quit. The encouragement that Paul gave the church at Corinth needs to be repeated over and over again today. "Watch ye, **stand fast in the faith**, quit ye like men, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13).

**CONCLUSION**

Finally, remember the Lord's statement about our final confrontation, **with God!** Rather than fearing our fellowman and separation from him, we had better fear what God can do to us eternally (Matthew 10:28). Paul reminds us that we shall all give account for what we have done and have not done, bad and good (2 Corinthians 5:10; James 4:17). Those who think that they can take Jesus and ignore what His words say will be sadly mistaken. Jesus warned the Jews of His day -

*"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of **me and my words** in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."* (Mark 8:38).

One cannot separate Christ from His words. We can reject Jesus but the words He has spoken will still be our judge (John 12:48). We can claim to receive Jesus, but if we refuse to take a stand with him **and His words**, he will be ashamed of us and reject our claims of faith in Him. "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say" (Luke 6:46)? What will your answer be to that, if you have failed to take your stand in God's word? Brethren, we have withstood the onslaughts of false teaching which have sought to destroy the Lord's church for years. We can continue to withstand all of the false and divisive teachings in the religious world today, but only if we clothe and arm ourselves as soldiers of the cross (Ephesians 6:10-17). If we stand **together** with God's word and each other, nothing can defeat us! We will also stand together around God's throne in the eternal heavens. What motivation to **take a stand!**

[**Editor's Note:** The article above was the first piece I wrote for the **Fulton County Gospel News** exactly ten years ago. I have chosen to rerun the article because it is needed today as much or more as it was necessary ten years ago. Fewer people today believe in Christ and His Word than a decade ago. There has been a continual erosion of respect for the Scriptures in the past decade both in the denominational world and in the Lord's church. Too many people think that God authorizes them to have their private faith and that no one should seek to correct them, even though their faith is not grounded in the truth of the Bible. Almost no one wants to be confronted or to confront others regarding what truth in religion really is. Personal preferences, popular ideas, and speculation have replaced the Bible as **the standard of authority in religion!** Brethren and friends, please search the Scriptures in this article and decide to take your stand with the Lord Jesus Christ.]

## AN OBJECTIVE STANDARD

by Max Patterson

When one speaks of the Bible as being an objective standard what does one mean? One means an authoritative criterion, or test, by which anything is measured. In spiritual matters, this standard becomes also the source of all right answers.

### **An Objective Standard Avoid Chaos.**

The need for an objective standard is seen everywhere, even in the ordinary affairs of life. Consider, for example, taxes. Suppose we did not have any authoritative standard of how much taxes we were to pay, and that it was simply left up to the individual tax collector as to how much the tax would be. Such would cause great confusion and many hard feelings.

Another area where one can see the absolute necessity of a standard of authority is sports. Suppose in baseball, for example, the batter hit the ball and got on first before the ball could be thrown to first. But suppose the umpire ruled him out anyway because, after all, one ought to be able to interpret the rules any way he wants to, or feels like it at the time. One can see the confusion that would result.

An objective standard avoids chaos. Our Lord came not to make man religious, but **right** religiously (Mt. 7: 21-23). He gave the proper standard to accomplish that (II Tim. 3:16,17). That standard is the New Testament.

However, men use various other criteria besides the New Testament as the standard. Consider, for illustration the following things that are viewed as true standards, which in reality are not.

**1. Feelings.** How many times have you heard people say, "I feel I am saved right here" (pointing to the blood pump called the heart). "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 1:12).

### **It Is Not In Man . . . To Direct His Own Steps. Proverbs 16:25**

**2. Conscience.** How many people are there who rely on their own

judgment. Paul did so and fought against the church for which our Lord died (Acts 23:1).

**3. Dreams and Visions.** People never seem to realize that people can dream the wrong thing. Paul preached that even though an angel from heaven preached that which was against the revealed truth he would be and was accursed (Gal. 1:6-9).

**4. Common Sense.** No one has a higher regard for common sense than do I. However, we are out of place when we try to figure out by rational thought what we are to do - apart from revelation. "The way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23).

**5. The Creeds of Men.** Gal. 1:8 tells us that we are not to listen to any men that preach a different doctrine. If the written creed says something different from the Bible, the Bible condemns it. If it says the same thing as the Bible, why have it.

**6. Religious Traditions.** In Matthew 15, Jesus answered a question with a question. The Pharisees wanted to know why the disciples of Jesus transgressed the **tradition** of the elders by not washing their hands before they ate. Jesus asked them, "Why do you transgress the **commandment** of God by your tradition? (Mt. 15:3). It is easy to set aside the commandment of God by the ideas drawn up by men and practiced by them over a period of years.

Contrasted with these ideas is the authoritative word of God. Authority inherently resides in God the Father (John 1:1-3; Deut. 11: 26,27; Rom. 9:8-18). All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus Christ (Mt. 28:18-20; 17:5; Heb. 1:1,2). The Holy Spirit worked through the apostles and others to inspire them so that which was written was actually the word of God, and thus the criterion by which we are to measure our lives, as well as the source of all right answers.

1037 West South St.  
Neosho, MO 64850

## LIVING WATERS OF LIFE

By Darrell Broking

In Exodus 17 we find the children of Israel in Rephidim, a place without substance for survival. Would it be a small thing for the God in heaven to provide substance for His people? They had already witnessed His mighty hand in action as He dealt with Pharaoh and delivered His people from bondage. Yet we see the Israelites chiding Moses, murmuring, and tempting Jehovah in the wilderness. They cried, "Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" (v.3).

In accordance with the Abrahamic promise, God vouchsafed a miracle for a permanent supply of water during the Hebrews' abode in Sinai. Moses was commanded to go before the people, with the elders, and smite the rock in Horeb, and water flowed out of it. This place was now referred to as Massah (temptation), and Meriba (chiding or strife), in memory of the Hebrews' rebellion and their doubting Jehovah's presence among them.

Deuteronomy 9:21 discusses the "brook that descended out of the mount." In retrospect the psalmist wrote, "He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers" (Psalms 78:15-16). Again in Psalms 105:41 we read, "He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places like a river." We should not be surprised to learn that the rock followed them as they journeyed in the wilderness. Further, Paul informs us that "that rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4). Thus we have a wonderful illustration of a gracious, merciful, benevolent God caring for His people in a place in which they could not care for themselves.

We too live in a place in which we are unable to care for ourselves spiritually. What a blessing to know that that rock, Christ, still follows us today. Jesus, the benevolent one, offers mankind "living water" (John 4:10); water of which the consumer "shall never thirst"

(John 4:14). Those arrayed in white are lead by the Lamb to these "living fountains of waters" (Revelation 7:13-17). Without this water mankind will dry up and wither away into the second death, of which no one will overcome.

Let us consider two points as we analyse these thoughts. First of all, as the book of Revelation bears out, only those arrayed in white will enjoy this fountain of life. Man in his sin is portrayed in Isaiah as "an unclean thing." Isaiah continues his inspired description by stating, "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). Isaiah's distress is resolved by the metaphor of Revelation 7:14. That is to say that our rags are washed clean and made white in the Lamb's blood. Peter said that man purifies his soul "in obeying the truth" (1 Peter 1:22). The pattern or form by which this purification is accomplished is written for us in Romans 6:1-6, 16-17. Therefore, in righteousness Peter was able to declare that "baptism doth also now save us (1 Peter 3:21). Only one baptized into Christ can enjoy this living water.

Secondly, we need to be ever mindful that the unrepentant murmurers perished in the wilderness. The wilderness wandering was a shadow of our Christian sojourn on this earth. In order for a Christian to enjoy this living water for evermore, he must live faithfully to the end. The cares of this life should never come between the Christian and his God. The Devil is extremely good at his art of deception. He places a great deal of pressure on the Christian to forsake assembling with other saints. Reasons are freely supplied why one cannot attend Bible classes and worship services. The Devil knows that as he begins to separate a Christian from the congregation, that Christian begins to die. Physicaly we could make similar application to a man being separated from his water supply.

As the child of God begins to remove himself from his source of sustenance, he begins to murmur,

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complain, and tempt the Lord. Chiding is then rendered against the Lord's elders. Bible class teachers, the preaching, and worship services. All of this is the fruit of rejecting the Lord.

Certainly faithful attendance alone does not constitute fidelity to God. Equally true is the fact that slothful attendance (Wednesday evening and Bible studies included) is the fruit of infidelity. When one has a bad day at work and decides that she is too upset to attend services, she is dying spiritually. When one reasons within that family pressures take precedent over the Lord's church, he is neglecting a thirst for truth. Will a man go for days without consuming water because he is tired, lazy, unhappy, or simply too busy to stop for a drink? Only if suicide is on his mind! We should have the same concern with the spiritual side of life.

The bodies of the unfaithful were strewn across the wilderness. Man should learn from the mistakes of long ago. Our merciful God is supplying us with the opportunity to drink of that rock and live forevermore. Each person cutting himself off from the Lord's merciful hand will fall into the second death. Let us as Christians live faithfully to the very end and receive that crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

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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; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; 16:1-2).
2. **PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 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; 1 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; 1 Corinthians 1:18-23).

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