

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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DECEIVING THE HEARTS OF THE SIMPLE

by Barry O'Dell

The existence of deceivers in religion is nothing new. Jeremiah, about 630 years before the birth of Christ, had to deal with a deceiver. God had revealed through Jeremiah that the people of Judah would be in Babylonian captivity for seventy years (Jer. 25:8-12). A false prophet by the name of Hananiah was causing Israel “to trust in a lie” (Jer. 28:15). Hananiah was telling the people, “Thus saith the Lord; Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years” (Jer. 28:11). As a result of teaching “rebellion against the Lord,” Hananiah died that same year (Jer. 28:16-17).

Matthew recorded these words of Jesus, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matt. 7:15). He warned His disciples that deceivers, false Christs, and false prophets would come (Matt. 24:5, 24). Paul warned the church in Rome that there were some who would cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which they had learned (Rom. 16:17-18). Paul also informed the church in Corinth that there were some who were “false apostles and deceitful workers” (2 Cor. 11:13). He also warned

Timothy that there would be some who would “depart from the faith” (1 Tim. 4:1). Peter warned his readers of false prophets, “... who privily shall bring in damnable heresies...” and that they would “make merchandise” of the souls of those who listened to them (2 Pet. 2:1-3). Finally, John admonished his readers, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 Jn. 4:1).

It is obvious that false teachers existed in the first century and that they are still around today. Not only are there those who teach false doctrine, but there are many also who claim for themselves the ability to perform miracles of healing and the ability to speak in tongues. Many of these false teachers spread their error over television, radio, and the internet. What does the Bible say about man’s ability to perform miracles?

First, the Bible clearly teaches that there were those who had the ability to perform miracles. Jesus casted out demons, healed the sick, caused the blind to see, gave hearing to the deaf, and even raised the dead (Mk. 1:21-3:12; Jn. 11:1-44). The apostles of Christ were given those same abilities (Acts 3:1-10; 9:36-43). There were even individual

members of the first century church who had spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:4-11).

Second, the Bible reveals the manner by which the ability to perform miracles was passed on. Acts 8:5-13 records the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem northward into Samaria. Involved in the spread of the gospel by Philip the people of Samaria were “seeing the miracles which he did” (Acts 8:6). Two apostles, Peter and John, were sent to Samaria, “Then laid they their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:17). The ability to pass on the Holy Spirit is here revealed as only available to the apostles of Christ. No one else, even though money was offered, had any part in this work (Acts 8:18-23).

Third, the Bible reveals that only certain individuals were qualified to be apostles. After Judas hanged himself the apostles sought another disciple to take his place (Acts 1:15-26). According to Peter’s words the only disciples qualified to do so were required to be with the eleven remaining apostles, “beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection” (Acts 1:22).

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P.O. Box 251

Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

Barry O'Dell EDITOR
Phone (870) 625-3217
E-Mail cocfegn@centurytel.net
Website www.fultoncountygospelnews.org
Brian Dixon Webmaster
E-Mail sales@halopages.net

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Apparently there were only two, Joseph and Matthias, who met the requirements. No one alive on earth today can be an apostle because no one on earth today witnessed the baptism and ascension of Jesus Christ. By extension, since there are no apostles on earth today to pass along the miraculous abilities, no one has the ability to perform miracles. First Corinthians 13:8 informs us that prophecies, tongues, and knowledge would fail, cease, and vanish when, "that which is perfect is come" (1 Cor. 13:9-10). That which is perfect is the complete and inspired revelation of God's will (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jas. 1:25; 2 Pet. 1:3).

In this particular study it is also important to understand the Biblically stated purpose of miracles. Mark records for us the following, "So then after the Lord

had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, **and confirming the word with signs following**" (Mk. 16:19-20). Hebrews 2:1-4 also refers to the purpose of miracles as that of confirmation. These "Galileans" (Acts 2:7) would be traveling around to various places with a new message which they received from the Christ. Not having a complete, written revelation, the ability to perform signs and cause their audiences to be "amazed" (Acts 2:7) and "wonder" (Heb. 2:4) would confirm that these men were commissioned by the Lord Himself. Another stated purpose of miracles comes from the pen of John, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, **that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God**; and that believing ye might have life through His name" (Jn. 20:30-31).

Today we have the complete, inspired revelation of God's will. That which is perfect has come (1 Cor. 13:10). Jude 3 refers to "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." The word "once" (*hapax*) is an adverb of time. Hebrews 9:28 also uses this word stating that, "Christ was *once* offered..." The New King James Version renders the end of Jude 3, "...the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." Also, Romans 10:17 states that, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The miracles and

signs which were present in the first century fulfilled their purposes and are no longer needed today.

Seeing that all of the above is clearly taught in the word of God, how is it possible for individuals to be so easily deceived today? What techniques are used by false teachers and so-called "faith healers" to lead people astray? One technique used is the claim of obedience to God. Jesus revealed this method as recorded in Matthew 7:22, "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?" These individuals may be claiming allegiance to God, but they are not doing His will (Matt. 7:21, 23). Another technique used is simple deception. Deception is defined as, "the act of making someone believe something that is not true." This technique is revealed by Paul in Romans 16:18. However, those who could be or are being deceived also bear some responsibility. The deceived are referred to as having hearts that are "simple." Being simple means that one might be unsuspecting of error or deception. God's child is taught to be vigilant (1 Pet. 5:8), awake (Eph. 5:14), knowledgeable of the Lord's will (Eph. 5:17). Also, in Second Thessalonians 2, Paul reveals that some are deceived, "... because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" and also because they, "... had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thes. 2:10-12). We are charged to, "know the truth" (Jn. 8:32) and to

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continue to grow in that knowledge (2 Pet. 1:5; 3:18). Finally, there are some false teachers, as Peter reveals, who bring error into the church “privily” (2 Pet. 2:1). This word in the Greek means that one attempts to “smuggle or craftily” bring heresies into the church.

The original false teacher was, of course, Satan himself who deceived Eve into disobedience (Gen. 3:1-5). Sadly, false teachers will exist until the Lord returns. The faithful child of God is charged to study God’s word (2 Tim. 2:15), discern between good and evil (Heb. 5:14), grow up in the Lord

(Eph.4:13-16), and contend earnestly for the faith (Jude 3). The Christian is encouraged by Paul to not be, “...tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine...” but to, “...grow up in Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:14-15).

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## Do Matthew 8:4 and Mark 5:19 Contradict One Another?

by Johnny O. Trail

A person asks, “Why did Jesus tell one man one thing in Matthew 8:4 and another man something different in Mark 5:19?” For a moment, let us consider the two passages. Matthew 8:3-4 reads, “And Jesus put forth *his* hand, and touched him, saying, ‘I will; be thou clean.’ And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith unto him, ‘See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.’”

The other passage is Mark 5:18-20. It says, “And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, ‘Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.’ And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all *men* did marvel.”

The context of these verses, like many other passages, is vital to understanding the dynamics of

what Jesus is telling these two men. In Matthew chapter eight, the man that is cleansed from leprosy is a Jew. We know this by what he is told to do.

In obedience to the Law of Moses, Jesus tells the man to first reveal himself to the priest, so that he can verify that the leprosy man has been cleansed from his disease. Leviticus 14 contains various commands for dealing with leprosy. The first command involves showing oneself to the priest. Leviticus 14:2-3a commands, “This shall be the law of the leprosy person for the day of his cleansing. He shall be brought to the priest, and the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall look...”

If the man cleansed of leprosy had gone to any person other than the high priest, he would have been guilty of violating the law regulating lepers who had been cleansed. Jesus strictly followed the Old Testament law, thus He demanded that the man He had just healed show himself to the priest and to no other person.

When one considers the various provisions in Leviticus 14, it

becomes evident that the Law was in place to protect those who might become infected with leprosy. In keeping with the commandments of God, Jesus wanted to make sure that he fulfilled all the requirements of the law before exposing himself to people in the general public as well as making the necessary sacrifices under the law.

The man who was healed in Mark 5 was most likely a Gentile. Mark 5:12-16 indicates that the herdsmen of the city were keeping the pigs that the possessed man’s demons took possession of and destroyed. Under the Law of Moses, pigs were considered to be unclean animals thus Jewish people would have had no dealings with such creatures (Lev. 11:7).

Since this man was a Gentile, and there were no provisions under the law for one who had been cleansed from demon possession, he was encouraged to tell others what the Lord had done for him. This was most likely because Jesus had been asked to leave after the pigs killed themselves by running headlong into the sea. Mark 5:17 informs us, “And they began to beg

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Jesus to depart from their region.”

In obedience to their request, Jesus was unable to remain in the region of Gadarenes. He encouraged the demon possessed man to tell others about the miracle that had been wrought in his life. Mark 5:19 reads, “And he did not permit him but said to him, ‘Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.’”

In Christ’s absence, he had a powerful spokesman—one who had been relieved of a horrible demon possession. This is not an uncommon thing. The Samaritan woman, also not a Jew, told the entire city about her interaction with the Messiah. As a result, every person in that region heard the

message of Jesus. John 4:39 reveals, “And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, ‘He told me all that ever I did.’” One sinful, Samaritan woman brought her entire city to Christ.

While it is speculative, one might imagine that the demon possessed man did the same sort of thing. One can understand why Jesus would tell this man to tell his friends about the wondrous miracle that was wrought; especially in light of the fact that Christ was not able to be there in the flesh. We need to follow suit and share our joy regarding Jesus with other people.

*Johnny preaches for the Sycamore Chapel church of Christ in Ashland City, TN*

**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; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

**THE CHURCH OF CHRIST**

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I 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; I Corinthians 12:13).

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