

ASTONISHING TEACHING OF JESUS

By

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In the free-fall of constitutional government that is now taking place, many Christians are asking just what they can do to save the country from tyranny and ruin. They no longer can trust the courts, and the voting process is invalidated because the illiterate and gullible citizens are manipulated by the media. The public is not aware that most of the high positions in government are now occupied by international Zionists.

Many are trying to turn the tide by informing people through newsletters and reports on the internet. But this only reaches a few in comparison to the millions who watch the managed news on TV. It is a David/Goliath situation and it looks hopeless.

But God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power and love and discipline (2 Tim.1:7). He has not left us without instructions and examples.

When Jesus began his ministry the state of Judea was occupied by their enemy, Rome, and although a bit of self-government was allowed, the people had no say whatever in selecting those in authority over them, which often included the most evil of men. Exorbitant taxation and confiscation of property were common, crime filled the streets and corruption sat in the courts.

In the face of these conditions, what did Jesus advise? “Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are they that mourn. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the pure in heart. Blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed are the persecuted” (Matt. 5:3-10). What kind of advice is this for such a time as that. Didn’t his listeners say, “You’ve got to be kidding.” Matthew unites that the multitudes were astonished at his teaching.” And no wonder!

He went even farther. In the midst of violence and oppression, knowing that the chief priests wanted to kill him and that the Roman soldiers eventually would nail him to the cross, he said, “Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you” (Matt. 5:44).

Astonishing, indeed! Downright unnatural! How could Jesus, who was born of human flesh, and tempted in all ways as we are, so dismiss the normal reaction to the world’s treatment?

For one thing, his worldview was clearly distinct from the pagan worldview. “My kingdom is not of this world,” he explained. “If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you” (John 15:18). Before one can be a follower of Jesus he must decide between God and Caesar, between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world. Many people are living in frustration because they have never done this. They are faithful to the traditions of their denominations, but powerless and joyless because of

their allegiance divided between God and Caesar. Jesus challenges us to a new and different kingdom, a view so radical that they killed him out of fear that his kingdom would turn man's allegiance from their own worldly kingdom. His kingdom is geared to one thing: the will of God. He bids us to "Seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33).

Jesus set before his hearers the way of life which he himself followed, the instructions which would guide them as they lived in a hostile world which hated righteousness and loved sin. Our attitude to the world about us must be entirely different from the attitude the world holds toward us. When we recognize this and accept it as the way it should be, because we are citizens of another kingdom, we can begin to have peace, even though the world knows no peace.

For another thing, Jesus had already yielded his life up to be used as the Father designed. When he was baptized by John he was declaring his submission to the will of the Father. Immediately he was subjected to severe temptations in the wilderness, and from there he entered into a public ministry which, within three and a half years, would result in his death. But he had already made the decision to die. "The son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt 20:28). His life was not influenced by any of the ambitions common to the world, nor was it shaped by reactions to other influences. He had already "lost his life" as far as this world is concerned.

And this is exactly what he instructs us to do. "He that finds his life shall lose it; and he that loses his life for my sake shall find it." (Matt. 10:39) Paul wrote, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). He explained that when we were baptized, "We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death ...knowing this that our old man was crucified with him..." (Rom. 6:4, 6). One who dies to self is no longer dependent upon what he is to gain from the world, nor is he guided by what the world may think of him. He is concerned about what God may gain and what people think of Jesus. He is a new creature (2 Cor.5:17), in another Kingdom, and can view this world objectively and recognize that it is headed the wrong direction. He can give of himself freely, for he has been crucified with Christ. He has been saved from sin and death by the mercy and grace of God, and from that moment on, every day, every hour, is a bonus, with an exceedingly great reward to come.

It is written of Moses: "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:24-25). When we choose to follow Jesus we are refusing the security and comfort which the world (the government), promises; we are choosing to receive the peace and joy God promises, rather than the pleasures which are sought by the pagan world.

Does this mean ill-treatment and persecution? Perhaps not in the sense of death or imprisonment as in China or Turkey, although we have the example of Waco and Ruby Ridge. Less dramatic is the price a Christian student must pay for holding to the truth in a

humanistic university, or the ridicule a teenager may suffer for refusing drugs, sex or alcohol. And what of the laborer who refuses to pay homage to the labor union, or the employee who reveals corruption in his company? And what is the reaction of most people when you decry the godlessness that is called entertainment today? We soon learn what John meant: “They are of the world: therefore speak they as of the world, and the world hears them” (1 John 4:5), and “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the evil one” (1 John 5:19).

The modern church has tried to make Christianity compatible with the world, and its entire organization is patterned after the world’s concepts: a hierarchy fashioned after a business corporation; a staff of highly paid professionals rather than a fellowship of servants with each one being a priest. It demands one professional sermonizer, rather than the saints edifying one another. I cannot imagine Jesus as the Senior Minister pleading for funds for the multi-million dollar building project. I can’t picture him, while all eyes are closed with the organ softly playing, pleading with people to “invite him into their hearts.” Rather, I see him crying, “Repent. If you would be my disciple deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me.”

This is still the message needed today. All kinds of efforts are being made by patriotic citizens to save the nation, to halt the loss of freedoms, to restore constitutional government, and to preserve national sovereignty. The decline of freedom and national sovereignty is in direct ratio to the decline of Christian faith and obedience to the Lord. Our nation is bogged down in sin, and this has far greater and more permanent consequences than all the political and economic problems put together. “For the wages of sin is death.” Jesus emphasized that it is no good to gain the world, but in the end, lose your life.

God did not send his son to save the U.S.A. but to save every individual who believes on him. He is not dependent on our nation. He is at work all over the world, and accomplishes His purpose for His people in the worst of nations, in the worst of times. Even now, as you read these lines, He is at work in you, “both to will and to work, for His good pleasure” (Phil 2:13). And we know what His pleasure is: “You shall love the Lord our God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind...you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:37, 39).

The astonishing words of Jesus still apply: “Be not anxious...but seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33).

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