

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Hebrews 12:12-13

THE INCREASE OF CHRIST

He must increase, but I must decrease.

John 3:30

The game of basketball requires that each team be composed of no more than five players. In the sports pages we often read about some players on NBA teams being termed “role players”. That means that their purpose on the team is primarily to fill a position and be useful in setting up plays so that the real stars (the Michael Jordans, Kobe Bryants, Dwayne Wades of our time) might occupy center stage and accomplish great exploits to the wonderment of fans. After all they are the reason people buy the tickets and come to the games. This scripture before us which was spoken by John the Baptizer as he (speaking on a much grander and more permanent subject than basketball) explained his own position as the forerunner of CHRIST. He intended to convey that his role (in the purpose of GOD) was limited and passing while that purpose for which CHRIST came into the world was of eternal consequence hence HE was worthy of all glory and was due the undivided attention of men.

In fact Isaiah used the word “increase” to describe the Kingship of CHRIST when he said, “*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.*” (Isa. 9:6-7) The original Greek word that John spoke in the new testament means that HE must presently and actively increase in power and glory, so much so that John said he (whom the LORD said was the greatest of all prophets; see Luke 7:28) was not even worthy to untie the LORD’s shoes. John was given but a glimpse of HIS glory but those who have been favored to see the truth of the gospel unfolded have beheld HIS glory (see John 1:14; II Cor.4:6) in the redemptive work of CHRIST and have been humbled by it. Paul said “*But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*”(Gal. 6:14)

The mark of true gospel preaching is that it is always centered in CHRIST and its purpose and subject is simply the magnification and glory of HIM who died for sinners and ever lives and reigns in HIS present glory as the LORD of lords and KING of kings. The true preaching of the gospel has no ulterior motive other than that CHRIST should be lifted up before men, resplendent in all of HIS glory and redemptive work. There are no hidden agendas, quests for measurable results, moral crusades, nor fundraising pleas which are added on. This is sharply contrasted by that which is being continually served up to the present religious world by the

babblers which the religious multitudes call “preachers”, with their permanent grins and affable ways. These are they *“which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women (and men too, it seems) laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,”* (2Tim. 3:6) These clowns and hucksters are continually “teaching” and writing books which are on every subject but the glory of CHRIST. They are ever learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. Rather than seeking the “increase” of CHRIST they plot and scheme to increase the crowds which will flock to hear them, cruise with them to this vacation spot or that, and cast in their money into their seemingly ever needy coffers. Sadly the religious multitudes love to have it so and delight in being made twofold more the children of hell than their masters.(see Mat.23:15) They have indeed heaped to themselves teachers (see II Tim.4:3) who will stroke their egos and feed their minds with messages affirming their self-worth, free will and ability to accomplish anything through positive thinking, seed faith, spirit babbling, and vain repetitions which they call prayer. But we have not so learned CHRIST. (see Eph.4:20)

We preach CHRIST and HIM crucified. *“Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”* (Gal 1:4-5) CHRIST crucified is not an important part of the gospel, it is not the beginning of the gospel, it is the very essence of the gospel. There can be no gospel preaching where this is not the sum and substance of all that is said. It matters not how morally upright men may be persuaded to be nor how devoted to a cause they may seem, if the glory of CHRIST’s redemptive work is not the heart of their thought and desire they have no knowledge of the gospel. Because men say they are zealous for the “souls” of men, if they are not preaching CHRIST crucified “alone” as the sinner’s need then they are but wells without water and clouds carried by the tempest. (see II Pet.2:17) We do not preach a cooperative effort whereby men may be saved. JESUS CHRIST procured the eternal salvation of HIS elect when HE hung on Calvary’s cross. Nothing can be added to that redemption and nothing can be taken from it. HE purchased everlasting freedom and eternal life for all of those which were given to HIM before the foundation of the world. Of those HE shall lose none.

We preach CHRIST reigning as KING. *“But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom.”* (Heb 1:8) We are not waiting for the day when HE will become KING. HE is already seated forever on the throne of HIS kingdom which shall never pass away. All things are put under HIS feet. HE came into this world to manifest HIS kingdom which stretches from shore to shore, HE presently rules in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and HE shall yet manifest the full extent of that kingdom in the ages to come. All things transpire exactly according to HIS will and HE shall accomplish all of HIS pleasure.

We preach CHRIST as the SAVIOR of sinners. *“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”* (1Tim.1:15) We preach that the SAVIOR came not simply to die for those who were lost but to seek them out and draw them to HIMSELF. HE came not for the righteous but for those who were by nature the children of wrath even as others. HE has not only purchased their redemption by imputing their sins to HIMSELF and imputing HIS righteousness to them but HE has sent HIS HOLY SPIRIT into the world to quicken HIS elect and call them to HIMSELF at the appointed time. HE is mighty to save and will leave no stone unturned nor abandon any which HE has purchased until HE has gathered them all unto HIMSELF. *“I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.”* (Heb 8:10-11)