

The Wednesday Word, Nov. 30, 2011: The Gospel and Authentic New Testament Ministry: Part 7

The gospel is the good news of a person; it's not a proposal. In the gospel, we proclaim Christ the God/Man who lived perfectly, revealed the Father perfectly and died perfectly. We preach Christ the mediator and substitute, the eternal Word made flesh who, having successfully accomplished His purposes, rose from the dead and ascended to the throne of heaven (John 1:14; Eph. 4:8-10). He is enough to bring the dead to life, to give strength to the weary and refreshment in every situation.

Christ crucified is the centre of authentic New Testament ministry. Him we preach (Col 1:28)! Being that the cross was a place of death we see that Christ's entire life was, in one sense, characterised by the cross. In order to save us, He, as a man, 'died' to all divine entitlements that were His by sovereign right.

Consider this:

- He created all things, but in grace, he stooped to become one of us, one of His own creation-- any way you look at it, that's a cross.
- He was the champion of heaven, but was made lower than the angels--- that's a cross.
- He was the eternal King, higher than all the monarchs of the earth, but at birth he was lain in a feeding trough for an animal --- now that's a cross.
- Before He was able to walk, King Herod ordered His assassination - that's a cross.
- To save His life, He, the all powerful one, who in His sovereign majesty could have stopped his enemies with one piercing glance submitted Himself to the protection of his earthly parents. Now that's a cross.
- As they fled, this One who was the brightness of the Father's glory, effectively became a refugee, -- that's a cross.
- Later, as He grew to manhood, His neighbours would have supposed Him a bastard, one born out of wedlock--- that's a cross.
- Although He was God, He lived in obscurity for 30 years, unrecognised and unappreciated---now that's a cross.
- He was altogether lovely, yet He was hated without a cause -- that's a cross.
- He was slandered and maligned by the very people He had come to save- that's a cross.
- His brothers and sisters considered Him to be mentally unstable. To them He was an embarrassment. One time they even tried to forcibly take Him home, away from public ministry - -- now that's a cross.
- He came to His own and his own received Him not-- that's a cross.
- He was always the outsider, always the reject--now that's a cross.
- He was the Almighty yet, at times, He was weak, tired and hungry -- that's a cross.
- He was rich yet for our sakes He became poor --again that's a cross.
- He was the righteous one, the Judge of all the earth yet He willingly became the guilty one ----now that's a cross.
- He hated sin yet he became sin for us--- that's another awful cross.

In the gospel we preach Christ Crucified, the revelation of the Father (1 Cor 2:2; Jn 14:9). But what is God like? Look at Jesus and you'll see Him (2 Cor 4:6). He is the God of the cross. He the God who was entirely willing to lay down all rights, riches and reputation in order to save His people. This is why we preach Christ crucified for in Him we bring God to the people and the people to God.

As Adolph Saphir says,

“All the decrees of God are comprised and centre in the person and work of the incarnate son.--God has only one purpose; to manifest Himself, to show forth His glory, to reveal His perfections and to show them forth in His only begotten and well beloved son, and in Him as in Jesus Christ crucified.” (A. Saphir: Christ Crucified; Lectures on 1 Corinthians 2; Lecture 4)

Thus authentic New Covenant ministry makes known the God of the cross in the person of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that's the Gospel Truth!