

Your Appointed Time Update

Yea, the stork in heaven knoweth

her appointed times .. Jer. 8:7



VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

FALL 2012

You Can't be a Fruitless Christian

Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Matt. 7:17-20

Recently, a TV personality while addressing a Christian audience, repeatedly said concerning the lack of fruit in his life, "I'm not there yet." Interestingly, the fruit he balked at the most was Jesus' prescription to "turn the other cheek" as a counter-response to someone smiting you on the right cheek (Matt. 5:38). Instead the TV personality indicated that due to his spiritual immaturity that he would respond in kind or with an even greater assault. While this reaction to Jesus' command is not uncommon among Christians, the more concerning part to me is that the attitude "I'm not there yet" seems to be a generally accepted excuse as well. Still others are quick to make another excuse for their unproductive lives, "God understands and knows my heart." The question we want to examine in this article is whether or not these attitudes are acceptable to the One that we all stand "open and naked" before, and to "the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13).

In this passage, Jesus identifies only two kinds of trees, good and bad. From the concrete laws of nature, He explains that good trees produce only good fruit and bad trees produce only bad fruit. As He continues, it becomes obvious that this is more than a horticulture lesson. The next law is never mistaken in nature; it is just people that try and create mixed-fruit. Jesus states that there is no such thing as a good tree producing bad fruit or a bad tree producing good fruit. There is another category missing from his list that Christians try and create, the fruitlessness category. If Jesus omits these categories then why then do so many Christians, as did our TV personality, insist on making these non-existent categories? Obviously it deceives one into thinking there is a comfort zone where God will allow one to remain fruitless or offers a convenient excuse to follow the dictates of the flesh. Like our TV host example, far too many Christians today, give this excuse so often that they sound like a broken record, saying the same thing over and over again. Despite all these excuses for unfruitful lives and even bad fruit, Jesus' sobering words stands the same: "Whereby their fruits ye shall know them."

If Jesus says we will be known by our fruit then our ex-

cuses are invalid. Why is this so important? Because Jesus is the Judge that we Christians will face one day. Of course, if one finds themselves at the other judgment seat and not at the judgment seat of Christ, then that would be the worst day ever bar none. The old saying would certainly apply here: "The road to hell is paved with good intentions." Even though most Christians feel they are being "condemned" if they are held accountable for their actions rather than their intentions, the Day of Judgment will be all about the fruit according to Jesus.

Another place where this truth of future and present judgment is brought to light is with the fig tree in Mark 11. Here we find Jesus attracted to a fig tree that obviously gave the appearance of being a fruit-bearing tree from a distance. Upon closer examination, Jesus found that it was all leaves and no fruit. Have you ever met a so called Christian like that? You know the ones that act so spiritual, but when you work closely with them, you may get a dramatic display or a temper tantrum if they do not get their way. Some may even curse you out! Pastor Larry Huch once said that the Lord told him, "You can't be a mean Christian." Although this is sure to ruffle the feathers of today's "all about me" Christians, this is right in line with our focus passage on fruit bearing. If you think that I am too extreme here, just count the references to "me" or "I" next time you try and converse with a brother or sister in the Lord. Or, if you are a church leader or pastor, just try and correct one of them. They are really not that hard to spot.

Because of the phrase in Mark 11:13, "for the time of figs was not yet," some have questioned the actions of Jesus in this all important passage on fruitlessness. There are two things though that can't be questioned: first, Jesus from afar approached the tree "if haply he might find anything thereon," and secondly, when he came to it, he found "nothing but leaves." Plain and simple, Jesus without a doubt expected fruit, but he found none. We must conclude that Jesus being the fair and just Judge deduced that this attractive tree was drinking up far too much of Father God's rain and sunshine to be allowed to continue in this fruitless state. If it was in fact not fig season, then there should have been some signs indicating that fruit was on the way, yet there were none. Jesus then proceeded to curse the tree. The next day, the disciples were amazed to find the tree dead. Contrary to popular opinion, Jesus is looking for fruit in our lives today!

Jesus again shows the Father's expectations for fruit in a parable of yet another fig tree (Luke 13:6-9). The Father, represented by the vineyard owner, had a fig tree planted in his vineyard. Here again, He came and sought for

Continued on pg. 2

fruit, but the Bible says, “He found none.” As a matter of fact, he had been looking for fruit for three years and each time results were the same, zilch. This time, the owner said, “Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground.” ‘Cumbereth’ here means: entirely idle, useless, fruitless, or ineffective. Have you ever met a Christian like that? At this point, thank God, the vinedresser stands in the gap for this unproductive tree and pleads with the Lord give the tree one more year to see if some TLC would help move this tree out of this unproductive state. After that, if the tree produced fruit it would be spared; if not, the tree would be cut down. This second example does affirm the mercy and longsuffering of God (as the second excuse that we are examining banks on), but places it within limits which most Christians seem unwilling to do today. This parable also teaches that one would be foolish to test God and expect that he or she could continue in a state of fruitlessness indefinitely.

Our TV host hit on probably the toughest of all Jesus’ requirements within the Sermon on the Mount stretching from Matthew 5:3 to 7:27, but there are many more such as: loving your enemies, giving alms, fasting and prayer, serving God alone and not money, not judging others, avoiding the broad way (the fast lane) and entering in at the straight and narrow gate to find life eternal, and doing unto others as you would have them do unto you. But there are more such as: overcoming anger, keeping your thoughts free adulteress thoughts, not divorcing your spouse else causing them to commit adultery, neither swearing an oath. We are told that our righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees and that we must be the salt and light of the earth even in this dark and tasteless society. All this is after you digest Jesus’ most important pathway to a fruitful life, the beatitudes: blessed are the poor in spirit (expressing their total dependence on God), those that mourn (for their sins and other’s), the meek (totally surrendered to God’s rule. Meekness

“the Day of Judgment will be all about the fruit according to Jesus.”

does not mean never angry, but when you are it is for the right reasons.), those that hunger(ing) and thirst (ing) after righteousness (a fresh and a new each day), the pure (unpolluted, undiluted) in heart, the peacemakers (not hell-raisers, troublemakers, or even peace-keepers), and finally, the highest state of blessedness, those that are persecuted for righteousness sake. Jesus taking this state even further says that blessed are those who are persecuted, reviled, and falsely accused for his sake. These, he says, should “rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven” (Matt. 5:10-12).

I am sure there will be those who will accuse me of making out God to be strict and merciless for simply emphasizing God’s expectations for fruit in our lives, but that is simply not the case. As we have seen God showed mercy to unproductive fig tree but within reason. Let’s be realistic, three years with no fruit still shows that God is very merciful and understanding. Also, the emphasis of this article is not to say that we should be perfect and never make mistakes. Proverbs tells us, that a “just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again,” but the wicked on the other hand are “overthrown by calamity” (Prov. 24:16 AMP). Here Pastor Parsley makes the point that the only proper attitude for a Christian is to be “either up or getting up.” My wise mother-in-law says it this way: “If the Word hits me (convicts her of wrong doing) today, it won’t hit there tomorrow.” Why? Because she reveals that she will fast, pray, read her Bible, or whatever it takes to move past that spot. Because she lives each day as Jesus could come back at any moment, she allows herself a time limit of one day. The real question of the day is, will you continue as did our TV host make the convenient excuse, “I am not there yet,” or will you as my mother-in-law does get (or remain) on the pathway to fruitfulness in Christ and say “If the Word hits me here today, it won’t hit me there tomorrow!”

Separating Faith from the Presidency

If you are like most, you are glad that this election is almost over so that the litter of campaign ads will disappear off the TV screens, radio, billboards, etc. The real question is then what? We all know that it does matter who leads us and each of us pray that the right person is selected. Does it really matter though what the president believes or what church they attend? Or can we easily separate the two as many prominent faith leaders are trying to make us believe? Recently on ABC News, Franklin Graham navigates around the critical issue this way: “Listen, we’re not voting for the ‘pastor in chief’ of the United States. We’re voting for the President. We’re looking for the person that is the most qualified, a person that shares common values, a person that loves the country, a person who can lead this nation out of the econom-

ic mess that we’ve gotten ourselves in.” As I scan the airwaves, despite the particular bias of the station, all are saying that “this is the most important election ever,” and that this one will be a “game changer.” It is not surprising to find political bias on the secular news agencies, but when you find the same on Christian stations it makes it even more difficult to sift out the truth.

When I listen to the Radio One network, with a black majority listener base, they support President Obama so strongly that you will rarely, if ever, hear an opposing word. Yolanda Adams in the morning and “Coco Brother” in the evenings, are both strongly urging their listeners to register, then get out and vote! “Coco Brother” makes somewhat of an attempt to hear both sides of the issue, but the one poor brother that

Continued on pg. 3

called in to voice his opposition to President Obama, one night, got cut real short when “Coco Brother” switched over abruptly into his prayer mode. That was the same mode he went into the day that President Obama announced his support of same-sex marriage. He urged his listeners not to be negative but instead to pray. I am all for prayer, don’t get me wrong, but sticking your head in the sand when “negative” discussion comes out is not going to solve anything. If you really want to be an informed voter and get the truth (which is very hard to do these days) you must hear both sides of the issue.

On the other hand, American Family Radio network, with a very conservative, white majority listener base, staunchly supports Romney and very much opposes the President’s policies as it relates to the family, economics, and Israel. In all fairness I have heard some opposing views aired on the AFR call in shows, but they are few and the host will only allow them to go so far before reeling them in. Recently, AFR has repeatedly echoed Billy Graham’s statement to “vote biblical principles on Nov. 6.” There have been several discussions geared to moving the nearly 60 million evangelicals past the issue of voting for a Mormon this time around. One program estimated that at the time of the airing, half of the Evangelicals were still undecided or not even going to vote at all. Dan Celia on his Financial Issues program had a caller this past week call in to say that based on Rev. Billy Graham’s urging to “vote biblical values” he could not vote for either candidate this election. Celia went into high gear. (With either of the stations mentioned, not voting is not an option and is viewed as a vote for the opponent.) Celia went into the surgical mode of disconnecting Romney from his Mormon beliefs so that he could be viewed as a viable candidate that would uphold conservative family values. Sharing the same views as Franklin Graham, Celia urged his listeners to stop viewing Romney as “pastor in chief” and instead view the office of the presidency as merely a secular office. Celia told his listeners that they should focus rather on the shared moral values that both Romney and Christian’s hold. The caller was not persuaded, and Dan seemed a bit perturbed.

In 2008, when Barack Obama was campaigning for the democratic nominee, his faith was under a high-powered microscope. We all became quite familiar with his pastor’s, Rev. Jeremiah Wright, controversial preaching or at least a 30 second sound bite taken from one of his sermons. At first Barack Obama repudiated the racist statements, but remained affiliated with Rev. Wright comparing him to an unpredictable uncle at family reunion. Then Hillary Clinton, at the time his opponent, rightly stated that you can’t control who you uncle is, but you sure have some say about who your pastor is. This must have resonated, for not long after, Barack Obama broke ties with his mentor and left the church. Sad to say, since President Obama has taken office, that is all we know about his church affiliation. Like him or not, the President with a vision to be a unifi-

er and the president of every American, knew that he had to cut-off the controversial Rev. Wright with his incendiary comments against whites and Jews. The point being, that in 2008, it was important what the President believed and what church he attended.

Now that we are days away from the elections, my question is why aren’t the same questions being asked of Mitt Romney? In the recent vice presidential debate, republican candidate Ryan, a catholic, aptly told how his deep convictions would affect his actions and could not be separated. Vice President Biden agreed, although he somehow distanced himself from the deeply held pro-life convictions of the Catholic Church, of which he also is a member. Ryan later in the debate, vying for Romney, told of his deep passion for his church. One would have to assume, Ryan also meant that Romney and his Mormonism can’t be separated either. In the following round of presidential debates, Romney affirmed his passion for his church (the Mormon Church) by informing the audience that he was a former missionary and pastor. I think all would agree that the answer to Martha Raddatz’ question was that the faith of the candidate does play a major role in their decision making process.

“Does Mitt Romney agree with the Mormon teaching that Jesus and Satan are brothers?”

Of all the commentators that I have heard, Sandy Rios, also a host on the AFR Network, did the subject the most justice in her straight-shooting article entitled Mormonism and the Presidency. In the article, she brings to light major tenants of the Mormon faith. She questions whether or not these tenants of the Mormon faith will affect Romney’s decisions if he is elected president: Does Romney believe that he will “one day be a god...equal to Jesus...ruling his own planet?” Does “he agree with Mormon teaching that Jesus and Satan are brothers?” Does he believe “America is the Promised Land where Jesus will return one day to rule from the Garden of Eden which Mormons believe to be Jackson County, Missouri?” I have to agree with Sandy Rios, if what the president believes was such an issue with President Obama in 2008, why aren’t the same questions being raised of Romney before this election?

Rios calls the reader’s attention back to the Republican primaries where Dr. Robert Jeffress stated at a Value Voters Summit that Mormonism was a cult. Conservatives, claims Rios, are squashing these questions rather than allowing them to surface, even to the point of “discrediting” Dr. Jeffress. Why you may ask? The answer reveals, in my opinion, why Republicans are going to lose the election this term. Rios puts it this way, “Because conservatives want, at any cost, to beat Barack Obama in 2012.” Honestly, Mitt Romney is not a strong conservative like Rick Santorum, Rick Perry, and some of the other candidates that ran for the Republican ticket. Since President Obama has so blatantly violated God’s Word by endorsing same-sex marriage, many that supported him in 2008 have said they would have crossed party lines for someone that stood for godly principles such as Santorum. Then why did Romney get the Republican ticket? Again the strategy that, in my opinion, will cost the Republican Party the election this year is selecting a candidate solely on the basis of being

Continued on pg. 4



The birds and the turtles know what God commanded them to do, and they obey Him. It is God's people that seem to have the problem! The Bible tells us in Jer. 5:22, "The waves may toss and roar, but they can never pass the boundaries I set," but in these last days, many of God's people are pushing the limits! Jesus, referring to the time before His return prophesied, "because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matt. 24:12). In Jer. 5:1, God challenged someone to search throughout the streets of Jerusalem and see "if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it." God was willing to spare that holy city if He could just find a single man with judgment and that sought the truth. Sadly enough, God did not find that person. They refused God's warning and suffered greatly under God's hand of judgment.

It is my prayer that we would be the people that God was looking for and know the judgment of God. Not in the way that the people of God in Jeremiah's time came to know it, but that we would know God's judgments as taught in His Word and correct ourselves accordingly, so "that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:31-32).

Pastor Kent Evans

Appointed Time Ministries
121 Wyck Street, Suite 301
Richmond, VA 23225
Phone: (804) 421-2566

Email: pastork@yourappointedtime.org

Separating Faith from the Presidency (cont.)

moderate enough (or more "electable" as some put it) to beat Obama rather than someone to uphold conservative principles.

Now with a moderate, passionately involved in a cult religion that believes that Jesus and Satan are brothers, evangelicals are being told that the right thing to do is to oppose Obama and "vote biblical principles." Dan Celia predicts that Romney will win by a "landslide" as Regan did in 1980 when the economy was in a similar predicament. What Dan is failing to see is that many Christians are unable to separate the president's faith from the office of the president as the Grahams and other faith leaders are urging us to do this election just for the sake of "beating Obama." My question is what would we be replacing President Obama with? I know that I will not be popular among my conservative peers, but there is more to selecting a candidate than beating the incumbent. Whether you agree with his policies or not, President Obama is extremely likable with the masses; Romney, on the other hand, struggles with likability and trust with the general public. I have thought of President Obama as a "rock star" because of his magnetism with the crowds and his oratory skills. Maybe I am not alone, for he just made the cover of the *Rolling Stone* magazine's November edition. You may not think that popularity is an important factor, but just ask yourself why then does the President spend time going to interviews with *The View*, *MTV*, *Jay Leno* and the likes? President Obama like no other president understands the importance of the young voter block and engaged them in politics even to the point of record contributions in 2008.

Don't get me wrong, personally I don't think President Obama needs four more years to advance his radical homo-

sexual and abortion agenda. The repealing of "Don't ask Don't Tell," passing of the *Matthew Shepard Act*, and the endorsement of same-sex marriages was enough for me! As the *Affordable Healthcare Act* continues to unravel, the Obama administration and Catholic charities have already gone head-to-head over the abortifacient drug mandate; and I am sure there will be other Christian agencies that will have to fight the same battles in the coming months. Even though Vice-President Biden laughed off talks of a "red-line" with Israel and Iran in his debate with Paul Ryan and tried to convince the American public that the Obama administration shares close ties with Israel concerning the Iranian crisis, anyone who is paying attention can tell that our relations with one of our closest allies, Israel, is strained. This administration demanded the removal of Israel's closest ally in the region, Egypt's former President Mubarak, all in the name of "democracy" while the anti-Israeli group, the Muslim Brotherhood, replaced him. What about Benghazi? Why would this administration not just come out and say that this was an act of terror against the U.S. Embassy from the beginning?

My point in all this is not to advise you who to vote for; nor am I telling you not to vote in this important election. I am saying to my Christian brothers and sisters to stop trying to make either candidate look like a clear cut "biblical value" choice. Honestly, either candidate has some serious "biblical" contradictions if you really judge them according to the Word. My advice is to turn off the biased radio and TV and get in your prayer closet and listen to your conscience. God is faithful to guide us if we will listen. Finally, I hope you will agree, or at least consider with me, that separating faith and the presidency is a bad idea. I am just not buying it, and I don't think I am alone.