

## **WHY IS THE CHURCH NOT GROWING? PART I**

Many older members of the Lord's church can remember a time when the Lord's church was growing at a phenomenal rate here in the United States. For a few decades the church of Christ was the fastest growing religious body in the U.S. However, these days it seems that this growth has come to a near grinding halt. In many places the church of our Lord is doing all it can to hold on to those who are members of the church, while the water in the baptistry has not been stirred in years. It oftentimes seems like the church may be fighting a losing battle. However, nothing man can do will destroy the church (Mt. 16:18). The church will grow and flourish, just as our Lord said it would (Mt. 13:31-33). But what has contributed to this decline in church growth in this country?

Materialism has been a problem with church growth from the very beginning. Love of things has caused multitudes of people to reject Christ the true riches for the riches of this world (Mt. 19:16-22). Many simply cannot let go of mammon to take hold of the Master (Mt. 6:24). Lest we lay all the blame on those who refuse to come to Christ for love of things, perhaps we need to look at ourselves. Materialism among the members of the Lord's church is one of the greatest factors contributing to the decline in church growth. Too many Christians are too busy "keeping up with the Joneses" to follow in the steps of the Savior. Too many Christians have put markdown tags on the souls that Christ considers so precious (Mt. 16:26). Rather than helping a lost soul find the road to heaven, too many of those in the Lord's body are paving their own road to hell with the mammon of unrighteousness. If we desire to see the church grow, then we are going to have to get our heads out of our bankbooks and back into the good Book!

Ecumenism, the idea that "I'm o.k., you're o.k.," has almost stopped church growth in its tracks. The majority of the religious world cries, "one church is just as good as another." If the majority is correct, then why try to convince someone to become a member of the Lord's church. After all, it does not matter if one is a member of the Lord's church or a member of some man-made church, right? Many in the Lord's church have swallowed this damnable doctrine hook, line, and sinker, and Satan is reeling them in ever closer to his devilish ship destined for damnation. No matter what men may say, the Bible explicitly says there is but one church (Eph. 4:4; 1:22,23)! The church for which Christ shed his blood (Acts 20:28) is not some grotesque conglomeration of man-made churches. Christ's church is the one and only church that one may find in the Bible (Rom. 16:16). When man obeys the gospel according to the mandates found in God's word, he becomes a member of the church of Christ, placed on the roll by God Himself (Acts 2:47). Christ planted only one church (Mt. 16:18), and rooting day is coming for all religious bodies that Christ did not plant (Jn. 15:1-8).

While there are many tools at Satan's disposal, perhaps no two have been as detrimental to church growth as have materialism and ecumenism. Lord willing, we will examine other factors contributing to the decline in church growth in a future article.

*Patrick Morrison*