

## **'Why don't we do the same?'**

By Ed Fowler

Jimmy Carter pondered the temptation recorded in Matthew 4 in which Satan offers Christ all the kingdoms of this world if Jesus would only fall down and worship him. Carter concluded:

"What a wonderful and benevolent government Jesus could have set up. How exemplary justice would have been. Maybe there would have been Habitat projects all over Israel for anyone who needed a home. And the proud, the rich, and the powerful could not have dominated their fellow citizens. As a twentieth-century governor and president I would have had a perfect pattern to follow. I could have pointed to the Bible and told other government leaders, 'This is what Jesus did 2000 years ago in government. Why don't we do the same?'"

Either Jesus missed his calling to become a project leader for Habitat for Humanity and frittered away his time on earth being God or Carter has misunderstood Matthew 4. The Lord could have done many good works during his earthly ministry but he would have had to forswear worship of the Father. Since restoring worship of the Father as it was before the fall of man is precisely God's purpose in history, this seems a bargain of dubious value. Jesus came to warn people against seizing the things of this world at the expense of eternal salvation. In the very next chapter of Matthew, he sets out in the Beatitudes his program for focusing on the eternal:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (5:3). And so on.

This is second-grade theology. Karl Marx could have figured it out. It seems so preposterous that Carter can't that one might tend to roll his eyes and move on to something useful to think about. Surely few in the evangelical church are so deluded. Or are they?

An evangelical church in Houston housed a rent-paying Christian school. The school moved out, leaving the space vacant and a gaping hole in the church's revenues. The church addressed the budget shortfall by leasing the space to a public school.

Did it not apply Carterite theology?

Since the Garden of Eden, Satan has pursued a goal of denying worship to God. His first tactic was to brand God a liar: Eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and you will not die as God said you would. At the temptation, he tried to get God the Son to worship him rather than the Father. If he had turned the First-Born, the King, he would have subverted all of God's people and won the ultimate victory.

He has changed neither his purpose nor his tactics. In his effort to deny worship to God today, Satan spreads the story that God lied about creating the earth and everything in it, about creating Adam and Eve. Instead, man has evolved from the lower species and is not distinct from them, as God's word tells us. Man is thus not created in the image of God. And God is not the all-powerful Creator, worthy of all honor, glory and praise – man's worship.

In America and elsewhere, Satan's primary agency for disseminating his version is the public school system. It teaches his curriculum. Many Christians send their children into it for 12 or more years of daily instruction in a system in which God has no role either in science or history and then fret over why these children do not develop a Christian worldview. They leave school convinced that man has evolved from the lower species, that he is not distinct from them, that he is not created in the image of God and that God is not the all-powerful Creator who is worthy of worship.

God is called a liar in the public schools every day. Now he is called a liar in church as well. The church, convinced of the value of its good works, invited in a public school that teaches the very curriculum the church is sworn to oppose. The revenue would keep the doors open and allow the church to pursue its projects.

Inside this house of worship, children are taught that God is not worthy of worship. Indeed, how could they worship a liar unworthy even of trust? But the good works in the community go on. Perhaps someday even Habitat can be added.