

GraceNotes

A Monthly Newsletter of Grace Christian Church

Grace Christian Church
1713 E. Sevier Avenue
Kingsport, TN 37664
(423) 247-2691

Dr. J. Edward Clevinger, Minister



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www.gracechristiankingsport.com

GROWING IN GRACE “WHAT HATH GOD WROUGHT?!”

May 24th is the 180th anniversary of Samuel Morse’s famous message sent from his invention, the telegraph. It was sent from the Capitol building in Washington, D.C. to Baltimore, Maryland. The tapped out, one-wire message said, “What hath God wrought?” It was a question-like phrase (in the KJV) from Numbers 23:23. The phrase is actually an exclamation meaning, “See what God has done!” So May 24, 1844, is one of the most important dates in the history of telecommunications and, moreover, in the history of the world. Did Morse have any idea where his invention would lead? It’s an intriguing question in our modern cyberworld where wireless telecommunication saturates the entire globe with billions of light-speed transmissions every second.

“What hath God wrought?!” is a timeless consideration. As per Morse’s invention, God gifted humanity with the ability to communicate instantly across great distances. According to historian Daniel House (ref. What Hath God Wrought, 2007), Morse saw the telegraph as “an instrument of divine providence.” Indeed, it has proven such. Today’s technology enables anyone positioned anywhere on earth to transmit or broadcast the Gospel in any language to any place on earth. A secular worldview doesn’t readily reckon telecommunications as a ‘God-thing,’ but a Christian worldview immediately recognizes the sacred significance of such for evangelism.

If the “What hath God wrought?!” consideration backwashes to Pentecost, the wonder of Morse’s invention and its technological heirs in our time are magnified in their importance for evangelism. In Acts 2 it is recorded that the Apostles waiting in Jerusalem received a prophesied outpouring of the Holy Spirit, resulting in what was called “glossolalia,” the Greek word for “tongue-speaking.” It was a miracle that enabled the Gospel to be verbally communicated across language barriers. In Acts 2:9-11 it is reported sixteen language groups present on that day simultaneously heard the Gospel and understood.

The meaning of the ‘Pentecost miracle’ is replicated across the ages through the many providential advances in telecommunications. Samuel Morse’s telegraph is just one example. Other examples before and after the telegraph include the Guttenberg Printing Press (1440), Alexander Graham Bell’s telephone (1876), Guglielmo Marconi’s radio (1897), Philo Farnsworth’s television (1927), Jean Bartick’s and Frances Spence’s mainframe computer (1946), John Blankenbacker’s personal computer, and the list goes on. It should also be noted that the storyline

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