

With Fidel Castro's Death, Don't Be Fooled by Media's Violation of John 8:32

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." –Winston Churchill

"History will record and judge the enormous impact of this singular figure on the people and world around him." –Barack Obama

"I never saw a contradiction between the ideas that sustain me and the ideas of that judged by results and symbol, of that extraordinary figure, Jesus Christ." –Fidel Castro

We welcome everyone to this cemetery today. From the quotations above, we see the importance of a legacy characterized by giving; judged by impact; and supposedly aligned with the ideas of Jesus Christ.

This departed leader gave, but did he give wisely? Let's judge his impact by his accomplishments and assess if he truly adhered to what Jesus said.

Much honor has been bestowed upon him recently. Canada's Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, called him a "remarkable leader." Former UK Labor MP George Galloway said Fidel was the "greatest man I ever met ... the man of the century." Jim Avila of ABC News lauded him as the "George Washington of Cuba."

Since Fidel Castro was baptized Catholic and educated by Jesuits radically committed to Scripture, let's recall Proverbs 26:1, "As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honor is not seemly for a fool."

The following review will obviously be difficult, but in order to proceed, the Cuban people must take inventory in a way that

reflects reality and doesn't romanticize Castro's Cuba. He assured the world in 1959 that he was not a communist, but when he came to power he proclaimed he was a "Marxist-Leninist." His leadership emanated from this worldview and resulted in what we now examine.

Fidel's Fruit

He called himself a "Freedom Fighter," yet he curtailed any ownership of private property and private enterprise. He told us, "The universities are available only to those who share my revolutionary beliefs." People fleeing Cuba were executed, and Castro killed by firing squad more than 3,500 people who disagreed with him. In 1994, he ordered a tugboat of women and children sunk because they fled Cuba for freedom.

He called Cuba a "Peoples' Paradise," yet what was once a beautiful vacation destination (remember Havana with Ricky and Lucy Ricardo?) became a peoples' prison of totalitarian Marxism. Castro eliminated elections and built a state-controlled Communist enclave lacking human rights, repressing dissent and removing religion.

Castro seized and demolished scores of church buildings and mandated children be indoctrinated in atheism.

Pre-Castro Cuba in 1958 led Latin America in low infant mortality, literacy rates, passenger cars per capita, food consumption per capita along with TVs, radios and telephones. Cuba's Gross Domestic Product was ahead of Italy, Spain, Ireland, Greece, Portugal and most of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Today, Cuba is an impoverished nation with supposedly free healthcare (archaic and well below minimal) plus free education (if you meet rigid standards and are part of the elite).

Bill O'Reilly, who visited Cuba last year, recently mocked

Jesse Jackson's comment that Castro "established many economic freedoms." The Fox News analyst stated, "The average wage in Cuba is \$20 per month, with people living in deteriorating shacks." [The O'Reilly Factor 11/28/16]

Cuba's harbor is almost empty of boats, so people cannot flee. The few people who own cars have models from the 1950s. On an island with a population of 11 million, 1.5 million have escaped. The Heritage Foundation reports in 2015, there were 8,505 political arrests, double the previous year's total.

Closing Considerations

Different views on Fidel Castro are worth considering in our closing remarks.

- Former President George W. Bush branded Fidel Castro, "a tyrant who left the earth last week."
- President-elect Donald Trump said, "The tyrant Castro is dead. We stand with the oppressed Cuban people for a free and democratic Cuba."
- Senator Marco Rubio of Florida and also of Cuban decent said, "Castro was an evil, murderous dictator who left an impoverished island prison where those who were opposed to the regime were routinely jailed and even killed."
- Former presidential candidate and Senator Ted Cruz, whose father fled Cuban oppression, stated, "Fidel Castro's death cannot bring back his thousands of victims."

From my own conversation in Miami with Cubans who risked their lives to escape Cuba's near hell-hole; my personal interaction and learning from the distinguished father of Sen. Ted Cruz, Rafael Cruz; and my vivid childhood recollection of Fidel Castro welcoming Soviet missiles that provoked a crisis that could have incinerated the world, I realize I risk my life in sharing this as we bid farewell to the Communist dictator,

Fidel Castro.

This deceased and deceived man paid lip service to Jesus Christ, who taught that continuing in God's Word enables us to know the truth which sets us free (Jn. 8:31-32).

May those in attendance at Castro's funeral today and the people of Cuba discover a new day of freedom in the now more than 16,000 underground churches being planted or resurrected in homes and buildings on this Cuban island.

Do not be fooled any longer, but go forward for what we pray will be a new day in Cuba, to the glory of God. *Viva Cuba Libre!* {eoa}