

2006

**West Virginia Christian
Lectures**

October 6, 7, 8

You Have Heard It Said,
But What Does God Say?

Church of Christ
20238 Coal River Road
PO Box 87
Seth, West Virginia 25181

THE BIBLE PLAN OF SALVATION

"What Does God Say?"

Hear the Saving Gospel – Romans 1:16-17, 10:17

Believe That Jesus Is the Christ – John 8:24; Acts 8:37

Repent of Sin – Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; 2 Peter 3:9

Confess Jesus as Christ – Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

Be Baptized (Immersed) into Christ for the Remission of Sins

Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:37-38; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Peter 3:20-21

Arise and Walk in Newness of Life in Worship and Service

Romans 6:3-5; 1 John 1:7; Revelation 2:10

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for every good cause.*

September 2, 2006

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2006 Lectureship Schedule**Friday, October 6**

1:00 PM	Authority of the Scriptures	Albert Farley
2:00	Does 1 Corinthians Contradict Matthew 19?	Terry Jones
3:00	Young Christians and Peer Pressure	Rick Tincher
4:00	Grace, Faith, and Works	Dan Kessinger
5:00	Dinner Served by the Seth Ladies	
6:30	Questions or Singing	
7:00	Marriage	James Rankhorn

Saturday, October 7

1:00 PM	Islam or Christianity?	Charles Pugh III
2:00	Church Government	W. Terry Varner
3:00	Premillennialism	James Farley
4:00	The Church of the Bible	Warren Kenney
5:00	Dinner Served by Seth Ladies	
6:30	Questions or Singing	
7:00	Divorce	James Rankhorn

Sunday, October 8

10:00 AM	Are Mechanical Instruments of Music Approved in Worship to God?	Scott Farley
11:00	Christian Homes	Roger Rush
12:00 PM	Lunch Served by the Seth Ladies	
2:00	Church Discipline	Warren Kenney
3:00	Blessings of Being a Christian	Ben Jones
4:00	Remarriage	James Rankhorn

Our Purpose

We live in a country that has great natural resources, an abundance of material wealth, but is deprived and starved for a love of the things of God. God has bestowed mankind with a tremendous blessing of his gift of freedom from sin. Yet, sadly, many will not make good use of what He offers.

In the history of man, there have been many innovations that people from differing walks of life discovered were always there but were not utilized for many reasons. Sometimes, there was no way known to properly use what was there. Often, there was just no interest in things that were here all along, and folks just didn't realize they would benefit from what was available. Today, the greatest tragedy man faces is not a shortage of oil, threats from abroad, corruption in high places, or physical sickness; our mortal enemy that threatens our eternal existence is the age old problem of sin. From the time when the serpent made the statement, "Thou shalt **not** surely die" (Genesis 3.4) and enticed mankind to sin, man has been inundated with disinformation. While leaders in a community may have a very negative influence on those around them, Satan has always done his best to negate the truth of God and make havoc of mankind's destiny. What are we to do? Since we will all be judged by God's word (John 12.48), who should we turn to for guidance? The author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12.2), of course! Our greatest treasure is waiting for all who love the truth.

This lectureship was designed to search out God's truth on some very timely and sometimes difficult subjects. All here at the congregation at Seth welcome you to this series of lessons designed to help broaden the understanding of all who attend and stimulate a desire to study God's word, so we can be prepared for an eternity in heaven.

Scott C. Farley

Preface

We are thankful to offer this, the 2006 West Virginia Christian Lectureship book, to our readers. We do so with the prayer that God will bless all who read it – to His Name’s honor and glory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

We commend the Seth church of Christ for hosting the lectureship this year. The elders have selected an important theme of study and have invited faithful gospel preachers to present subjects that are vital to our service to God in the church. The Seth members have worked many, many hours in preparing for this week. We thank everyone who worked in every way.

This is the first lectureship we have conducted in this section of the state. It is especially delightful for me to be in this part of our state and to be with my son, Scott, who preaches for the Seth congregation. We pray that we may have other lectureships in this area in the future.

I was born on the Kentucky border – not too far from the Tug Fork of the Big Sandy River, at Crum, WV, in Wayne County. My father was a coalminer. He and Mom raised their family of eight boys and three girls at Longacre, a coal community on the banks of the Kanawha River near Montgomery. We attended services at Ward, Shrewsbury, Smithers, and Boomer.

This is our seventh lectureship and our seventh lectureship book.

1. Mannington church of Christ: “Thus Saith The Lord” (2000)
2. Martinsburg church of Christ: “A Plea For the Fundamentals” (2001)
3. Martinsburg church of Christ: “Give Me The Bible (2002)
4. Pennsboro church of Christ: “Christianity: The Hope of the World” (2003)
5. Pumpkin Center church of Christ: “Great People of the Bible” (2004)
6. Pennsboro church of Christ: “Worthy Is The Lamb!” (2005)
7. Seth church of Christ: “You Have Heard it Said, But What Does God Say?” (2006)

We are thankful to every one of our speakers for participating in this important effort. We thank them for providing their articles for this book and for the special October issue of the paper. All of our speakers did not submit lecture manuscripts. Some of the speakers sent biographies and these have been printed at the end of each speaker’s first or only lecture.

We wish to give every family who attends the lectures a free copy of this book. Please receive it with our compliments and very best wishes.

I am indebted, again, to my wife, Nancy, who has graciously proofread each of these articles for grammatical purposes and to Lester Headley, of the Salem congregation, who helped me, immensely, in printing this book.

-Albert E. Farley, editor

THE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES

Albert E. Farley

The authority of the scriptures is a vital subject of study for it lies at the heart of all that we say or do in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. In our study we will seek to follow the admonition of the apostle Peter when he said, “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.” 1 Peter 4:11.

What do we mean by the word “scripture(s)”?

The word “scripture” is found 32 times in the KJV of the Bible: once in the Old Testament and 31 times in the New. The word “scriptures” is found 21 times – all in the New Testament.

Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible gives us three words from which our English words “scripture” and “scriptures” are translated. In the Old Testament the word is *kathab* (3791) and means. “something written, i.e. a writing, record or book: -register, scripture, writing.” (Daniel 10:21) In the New Testament two words are involved. *graphe* (1124) is defined as “a document, i.e. holy Writ (or its contents or a statement in it): -scripture.” (Acts 8:32, 35) The second word, *gramma*, (1121) is defined as “a writing, i.e. a letter, note, epistle, book, etc.; plur. learning: -bill, learning, letter, scripture, writings, written.” (2 Timothy 3:15)

In the second epistle written by the apostle Peter, in chapter 3:15, 16, Peter spoke of the writings of the apostle Paul, saying, “And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, *as they do also the other scriptures*, unto their own destruction.” It is vitally important that we accept the writings of the apostles and other New Testament writers as the holy scriptures from God.

What do we mean by the word “authority”?

Webster’s New World Dictionary defines *authority* thus: “1. the power or right to give commands, enforce obedience, take action, or make final decisions; jurisdiction ... 2. such power as delegated to another ... 3. power or influence

resulting from knowledge ... 4. a) the citation of a writing, decision, etc, in support of an ... action, etc. b) the writing, etc. cited 5. reliability of a source or witness, writing, etc. cited ..." (Webster's, p. 94)

The word *authority* is found 33 times in the King James Version of the Bible: twice in the Old Testament and once in the New. The word *authorities* is found once; the word *author* is found twice.

Strong gives us six Bible words from which our English words *authority* and *authorities* are translated. In the Old Testament, two words are involved. The first, *togeph* (8633) means, "might or positiveness: - authority, power, strength" (Esther 9:29). The second, *rabah* (7235) means "to increase: - ... be in authority ..." (Proverbs 29:2)

In the New Testament there are four words to consider. The first is *exousia* (1849) which means "... privilege, force, capacity, competency, freedom, mastery, magistrate, superhuman, potentate, token of control, delegated influence: - authority, jurisdiction, liberty, power, right, strength" (1 Corinthians 15:24) The second word is *katexousiazō* (2715) and it is defined, "to have (wield) full privilege over: - exercise authority" (Matthew 20:25; 10:42) The third word is *dunastes* (1413) and it is defined as "a ruler or officer: - of great authority, mighty, potentate" (Acts 8:27) The fourth word is *authenteō* (831) and it is defined, "to act of oneself, dominate: - usurp authority over." (1 Timothy 2:2)

Finally, Strong gives us two Bible words from which we have our English word *author*. Both of these are in the New Testament. The first is *altios* (159) and is defined as "causative; a causer: -author" (Hebrews 5:9). The second word is *archegos* (747) and means "a chief ruler: - author, captain, prince." (Hebrews 12:2)

THE WRITERS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES DISPLAYED THE HIGHEST REGARD FOR THE AUTHORITY OF THEIR WRITINGS.

The expressions, "saith the Lord," or "thus saith the Lord" are found hundreds of times in the Old Testament. The scriptures are referred to in various ways. They are said to be "the law," or "the book of the law" Joshua 1:7. The writers often establish the authority of their truths with the expression "it was written" 2 Chronicles 30:5, 18.

Moses

Moses lived approximately 1500 years B.C. He wrote the first five books of the Bible. Moses made the claim that the Law was from God. "And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the

tables.” Exodus 32:16 As he addressed the children of Israel, he said, “Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers giveth you. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.” Deuteronomy 4:1-2. (See also 12:28, 32; 31:24-26)

David

David had very little of what we, today, have of the Holy Scriptures. He had the books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. Yet, David’s high regard for the authority of the scriptures is often strongly expressed in his writings. In Psalm 1:1, 2, he wrote “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.”

Psalm 119

One of the most remarkable of all of the Psalms is Psalm 119. It is the longest “chapter” of the Bible: 176 verses. In these 176 verses, there is a reference to the scriptures in 174 of them!

In the King James Version of the Bible, there are ten English words used in the translation of Psalm 119 that refer to the Holy Scriptures of God. Note:

commandment(s) (6, 10, 19, 21, 32, 35, 47, 48, 60, 66, 73, 86, 96, 98, 115, 127, 131, 143, 151, 166, 172, 176)

law (1, 18, 29, 34, 44, 51, 53, 55, 61, 70, 72, 77, 85, 92, 97, 109, 113, 126, 136, 142, 150, 153, 163, 165, 174)

judgments(s) (7, 13, 20, 30, 39, 43, 52, 62, 66, 75, 84, 102, 106, 108, 120, 121, 137, 149, 156, 160, 164, 175)

precepts (4, 15, 27, 40, 45, 56, 63, 69, 78, 87, 93, 94, 100, 104, 110, 128, 134, 141, 159, 168, 173)

righteousness (40, 123, 142, 144, 172)

statutes (5, 8, 12, 16, 23, 26, 33, 48, 54, 64, 68, 71, 80, 83, 112, 117, 118, 124, 135, 145, 155, 171)

testimony(ies) (2, 14, 22, 24, 31, 36, 46, 59, 79, 88, 95, 99, 11, 119, 125, 129, 138, 144, 146, 152, 157, 167, 168)

truth (30, 43, 142, 151)

word(s) (9, 11, 16, 17, 25, 28, 38, 41, 42, 43, 49, 50, 57, 58, 65, 67, 74, 76, 81, 82, 89, 101, 103, 105, 107, 114, 116, 123, 130, 133, 139, 140, 147, 148, 154, 158, 160, 161, 162, 169, 170, 172)

way(s) (1, 3, 14, 15, 27, 30, 32, 33, 37)

Truly, David had the highest regard for the authority of the Word of God. In Psalm 119:89 he wrote, "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven."

JESUS CHRIST UPHELD THE AUTHORITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES.

When Jesus was confronted by the tempter, as recorded in Matthew 4, He quoted from the writings of the Old Testament. In all three recorded accounts of the temptations, Jesus said, "It is written ..." - quoting from Deuteronomy 8:3; 6:16; 6:13; 10:20. Matthew 4:4, 7, 10.

When Jesus referred to John the Baptist, He said, "For this is he, of whom it is written ..." (Matthew 11:10) quoting from Malachi 3:1. When He rebuked those who rejected His Words of Life, He said of them, "And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias (Isaiah), which saith ..." (Matthew 13:14), quoting from Isaiah 6:9.

When Jesus answered those who would grant divorce and remarriage for every cause, He said, "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said ..." (Matthew 19:4-5). Here, Jesus referred to the scriptures as recorded in Genesis 1:27; 2:24; 5:2.

During His public teaching, Jesus referred to many historical men and women of the Old Testament scriptures: Abel to Zacharias, Matthew 23:35; Noah, Luke 26-28; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, John 8:56, 58; Lot's wife, Luke 17:29-32; Moses, Mark 7:10; David, Luke 6:3-5; Solomon, Matthew 12:42; Queen of the South, Matthew 12:42; The prophets which were before, Matthew 13:17; Elijah, Mark 9:12-13; Elisha, Luke 4:27; Naaman, Luke 4:27; Jonah, Matthew 24:15.

Jesus referred to many historical Old Testament places and events: The beginning of the creation, Mark 13:19; The creation of man and woman, Matthew 19:4; Noah and the flood, Matthew 24:37-39; The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Luke 17:29-32; The Feast of the Passover, Matthew 26:1, 18, John 22:11, 15; Moses and circumcision, John 7:22, 23; Moses and the burning bush, John 20:37; Moses and the manna in the wilderness, John 6:49, 58; Moses lifting up the brass serpent in the wilderness, John 3:14; Destruction of Tyre and Sidon, Luke 10:13, 14; Jonah being in the belly of the whale (giant fish) three days and three nights, Matthew 12:39, 40.

Jesus quoted and referred to many Old Testament scriptures that prophesied of Him and that were fulfilled in His life, work, and death. "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. ¹⁷And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, ¹⁸The Spirit of the Lord is

upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, ¹⁹To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. ²⁰And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. ²¹And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” Luke 4:16-21 (Isaiah 61:1, 2). “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.” Luke 18:31 (22:22, 37).

After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus and made application of a great many Old Testament scriptures to Himself. “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.” Luke 24:27 “And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” Luke 24:32

In his appearance to the eleven, He tied all of the prophecies together. “And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” Luke 24:44-47

Jesus frequently rebuked his listeners for not knowing or receiving the authority of the Old Testament scriptures. “Have ye not read what David did ...?” Matthew 12:3, 4 “...have ye not read in the law ... ?” Matthew 12:5 “Yea; have ye never read ...?” Matthew 21:16 “Did you never read in the scriptures ... ?” Matthew 21:42 “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.” Matthew 22:29

THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST

Jesus emphasized that His authority was not in conflict with the Old Testament scriptures but, rather, that His mission was to fulfill and bring to a conclusion the scriptures of the Old Testament. He said He did not come to destroy the law or the prophets but to fulfill them. Matthew 5:17 “(You) Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” John 5:39 “For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?” John 5:46

In the Sermon on the Mount, recorded in Matthew, chapters 5, 6, and 7 and Luke 6:20-49, Jesus frequently used the expression, "I say unto you ..." This expression is found 10 times in Matthew's account and once in Luke's. It is often preceded by the words "But ...," "Therefore ...," "Verily ...," or "Verily, verily ..." At the close of this sermon, Matthew wrote, "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." Matthew 7:28, 29.

God spoke out of the cloud on the mountain of transfiguration to show the superior authority of Jesus' words over the words of Moses (the law) and Elijah (the prophets). Matthew 17:1-5; Mark 9:2-7; Luke 9:28-35.

Jesus emphasized His authority over the leaders of the Old Testament. In Matthew 12:41, he said, "... behold, a greater than Jonas is here." In the next verse, he said, "... behold, a greater than Solomon is here." When He spoke of marriage, divorce, and remarriage in Matthew 19:1-12, He said Moses, because of the hardness of their hearts, suffered (allowed) them to put away their wives for every cause. Then, Jesus said, "... but in the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. (19:8, 9) He taught his superiority over David in Matthew 22:42-46 and Mark 12:35-37.

After His resurrection, Jesus declared that all power and authority had been given to Him "in heaven and in earth." Matthew 28:18-20. With this authority, He promised the apostles that He would send the Holy Spirit to them. They would be taught all things and all things that He had taught them would be brought to their remembrance. John 14:26 The Holy Spirit would (through them) reprove the world of sin, righteousness, and of judgment. John 16:8-10. The Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth and show them things to come. John 16:13

THE NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES

The apostles and other New Testament writers trusted in the authority of the Old Testament scriptures and, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, became His instruments in writing the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament of Christ.

The Gospels. H. Leo Boyles wrote, "There are about forty proof passages in Matthew from the Old Testament in connection with even the minor details of Christ's career ... Nearly every chapter in Matthew has quotations from the Old Testament ... he devotes more attention than do all the others to the fulfillment of prophecy ..." (Boyles xii) Many other scriptures are quoted in the other gospels.

Acts. In 2:14-21, Peter said that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost was that which was spoken by the Old Testament prophet Joel in Joel 2:28-32.

Romans. There are references to the Holy Scriptures in every single chapter of this great book. In 15:4, he wrote, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”

1 Corinthians. After quoting from the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Job, Psalms, Deuteronomy, Leviticus, and Exodus, Paul said, in 10:11, “Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” In 16:37, Paul made a great claim “... that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.”

2 Corinthians. In 3:1-3, and in verse 6, Paul said that he and the other apostles were able ministers of the New Testament – not of the letter but of the spirit. He said that the first ministration (Old Testament), written on stones was done away. 3:7 In 5:19, he wrote that God had committed unto him and to the other apostles the word of reconciliation.

Galatians. In chapter 1, verses 11 and 12, Paul certified that his gospel was not derived from any human source but came by the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1:11, 12. He closed his letter by saying, “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.” 6:16.

Ephesians. Paul said, in 2:15, of the authority of the Old Testament, “Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances ...” Speaking of the recorded gospel of Christ he said, in 3:5, “Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.”

Philippians. In 3:16, he wrote, “... let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.” As he closed, he wrote, “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard and seen in me do: and the God of peace shall be with you.” 4:9

Colossians. In a great and clear declaration of the authority of Christ, said, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom: teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” 3:16, 17. In closing, he charged them “... And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistles from Laodicea. 4:16

1 Thessalonians. Paul declared, in 2:13, “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” As an apostle he closed by saying, “I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.” 5:27

2 Thessalonians. Paul wrote, in 1:10, “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether *by word*, or *our epistle*. 2:15. He closed by expressing his confidence that they would do the things he had commanded them.

1 Timothy. Paul warned of some who had swerved and turned aside from the faith unto vain jangling. 1:5 He wrote, in 3:14, 15, “These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

2 Timothy. In 2:15, 16, Paul said, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.” A great declaration of the authority of the scriptures is recorded in 3:14-17. “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou has known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” He then closed with this charge, “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” 4:1-4.

Titus. Titus was charged to hold fast the faithful word as he had been taught – that he might be able by sound doctrine to exhort and convince the gainsayers. 1:9. Paul said, “For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake.” 1:10. These were to be rebuked sharply. Titus was not to give heed to Jewish fables nor to commandments of men that turn from the truth. 1:13, 14. He was to speak the things which become sound doctrine: 2:1. He

was to speak, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. 2:15. He was not to let any despise him.

Hebrews. The writer of the book of Hebrews begins by establishing the supreme authority of Jesus Christ over all past prophets and writers. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;” 1:1, 2 Then, in the first chapter, alone, there are at least 14 direct references to Old Testament scriptures and several indirect references. In the remaining twelve chapters, the writer makes at least 24 direct quotes from the Old Testament and many, many references to others.

James. James writes, in 1:21, “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”

1 Peter. Peter wrote that his readers had purified their souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren (1:22) and that they had been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. 1:23, 24. He then said, “But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” 1:25). We, as newborn babes, are to desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby. 2:2. With this word, we will be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks us a reason of the hope that is in us, with meekness and fear. 3:15. When we speak, we are to speak as the oracles of God. 4:11. When we resist the devil, we are to resist him steadfast in the faith. 5:8.

2 Peter. Peter wrote of God’s divine power through which He has given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who has called us to glory and virtue. (1:3, 4) Through this knowledge we can be fruitful and make our calling and election sure. (1:5-11) He assured his readers that he and the other apostles had not followed cunningly devised fables but had delivered to them a more sure word of prophecy. 1:16-19. He said, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

1 John. John’s charge to his readers is to abide in the divine truth that they had heard from the beginning. 2:24 In this letter, John speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Word of life. 1:1. Their fellowship with the Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and with the apostles depended, completely, upon their walking in the light. “... if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, ...” 1:7 They could know that they knew God - if they would

keep his commandments. (2:3) They were strong because the word of God abided in them. 2:14 The transgression of the law is sin. 3:4 They were to try the spirits (teachers, prophets) whether they were of God. (4:1, 2) Their love of God and of the children of God was proven by their keeping of His commandments. 5:1-3

2 John. John rejoiced when he learned these were walking in the truth, as they had received a commandment of the Father (4). They were to walk in the commandment to love one another (6). Whoever would transgress and abide not in the doctrine of Christ had not God. If any man would bring not the doctrine of Christ unto them, they were not to receive him into their houses, nor to bid him God speed (9-11). Those who would bid him God speed would be partakers of his evil deeds.

3 John. John rejoiced greatly when he learned that Gaius allowed the truth to abide in him and that he walked in the truth (3, 4). He charged him to follow not evil but to follow that which is good.

Jude. Jude wrote to exhort his readers to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once (for all time) delivered unto the saints” (3). False teachers had crept into the church and turned the grace of our God into lasciviousness (4). These false teachers are called filthy dreamers, defilers of the flesh, despisers of dominion, and evil speakers of dignities (8). They had forsaken the true way and were following after the way of Cain, the error of Balaam and the gainsaying of Core (11). They were spots in their feasts of charity, clouds without water, dead trees without fruit or with dead fruit (12) They were raging waves and wandering stars (13). They were murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts (16). Jude closes by admonishing them to remember the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ and to keep themselves in the love of God (17, 21).

WHAT IS YOUR AUTHORITY OF LIFE?

What do you believe? Why do you believe what you believe? Why do you live the way you live? Why do you think like you think and say the things you say? Everyone is living by some kind of authority.

Some people live by their own authority – they do that which is right in their own eyes. Judges 17:6. This is not a safe choice. “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” Proverbs 14:12. The way of man is not in himself. Jeremiah 10:23.

Some use family – right or wrong – as their authority or standard. Neither is this safe. Jesus said, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” Matthew 10:37.

Some use the majority as their standard of right and wrong. They “go with the flow.” But the Bible warns us, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” Matthew 7:13, 14.

Some use human religions, denominational doctrines, and traditions as their authority of faith and worship. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” Matthew 15:9.

What is your authority? Let us today accept the authority of the Holy Scriptures. When we accept the authority of God’s Holy Word, we accept the truths that

- Almighty God is above all. Genesis 1:1; 1 Corinthians 11:3
- The Father has given all power unto His Son, Jesus Christ. Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Timothy 2:5
- Jesus selected his apostles, gave them the keys of the kingdom and commissioned them to preach the gospel into all the world. Matthew 10:1-4; Matthew 16:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16; 2 Corinthians 5:20
- Jesus prayed the Father and He sent the Holy Spirit to teach, lead, and guide the apostles in all they said and wrote. John 14:23-26; 16:13, 14; 1 Corinthians 2:12, 13

WARNINGS

If we reject the authority of the Holy Scriptures, the wrath of God will come upon us. Concerning his authority as an apostle and of the all-sufficiency of the gospel, Paul wrote, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet please men, I should not be the servant of Christ.” Galatians 1:6-10.

Paul gave this divine charge in 2 Thessalonians 3:6: “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. This charge was so strong, he concluded by saying, in 3:14, “... if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.”

As Paul closed his letter to Titus, he wrote this charge, “A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.” 3:10, 11.

May God help us all to be like the noble Bereans of Acts 17:11. “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”

We have heard what men say, but what does God say? In these lectures, we, with the words of the apostle Paul, “... commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.” Acts 20:32.

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Biography

Albert Farley was born at Crum, West Virginia, April 26, 1942, the son of William H. and Clista Spaulding Farley. He served four years in the U.S. Navy. He attended Ohio Valley College (1964-66), where he met and married Nancy Ann Brewer. They have four children: Scott, Clista Heintzman, Rebecca Ragle, and Elisabeth Taylor; and four grandchildren: Bethany and Darren Heintzman and Aaron and Andrew Ragle. He preached his first sermon (1964) at Red Bush, OH. He began full-time preaching in 1966 at Belington, WV. He has also worked with WV congregations at Chesapeake, Weston, Crum, Webster Springs, and Salem, where he has lived since 1982. He is a graduate of Glenville State College (BA in Elementary Education) and taught the fifth grade at Crum Elementary School. He has done graduate work with the Alabama School of Religion. He has done some radio and television work and is the editor of *West Virginia Christian*.

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DOES FIRST CORINTHIANS CHAPTER SEVEN CONTRADICT MATTHEW CHAPTER NINETEEN?

Terry G. Jones

Marriage is the world's oldest institution. It was given by God in the Garden of Eden to facilitate the happiness of mankind. The Genesis record states, "and the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him' ... Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (2:18, 24). When Jesus was questioned by the Pharisees on the subject, He reminded them of God's original plan by quoting the Old Testament record and then adding this vitally important command, "Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:6). The Lord made it abundantly clear that God intended marriage to irreversibly unite a man and a woman for life.

Unfortunately, man has failed to honor God's word in regard to marriage. As a result, the church has had to refute a host of false ideas that have been set forth in an effort to justify the unscriptural divorces and remarriages of those who have brazenly ignored the law of God. One such erroneous effort suggests that Jesus gave one reason for divorce and remarriage in Matthew 19:9, and Paul gives a second reason for one to divorce his mate and scripturally remarry in 1 Corinthians 7. In light of that, we have been called upon to examine the question, "Does 1 Corinthians 7 contradict Matthew 19?"

Let us begin with a brief word concerning the nature of scripture. The Bible is the inspired, inerrant word of God. That is, it is from God and, therefore, free from error or contradiction. The inspired apostle Paul stated, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Since the Bible is inspired of God and not the product of man, then we can have confidence that it is void of any contradictions. Therefore, any seeming contradictions we may find is evidence of misunderstanding on our part and will require deeper study that we may find the harmony between those passages. With that in mind, let us turn our attention to the two passages under consideration for this study.

MATTHEW 19

In Matthew chapter 19, the Pharisees tempted Jesus by trying to trip Him up with questions about marriage, divorce and remarriage. Ironically, men today are still trying to do the same thing, but the Bible still reads the same way that it always has. Jesus reminded those of His day of God's original

plan that marriage is for life. He then declared that there is only one exception that has been granted, whereby one may scripturally divorce his or her mate and marry again. Jesus said, “And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery” (Matthew 19:9). The clear teaching of Jesus here is that there is only one reason that a person may divorce his or her mate and marry another, and that is where that mate has committed sexual immorality. Jesus taught that marriage is for life with this one, and only one, exception. However, there are some who claim that Jesus gave one exception but Paul gave another in 1 Corinthians 7. So, let us now turn our attention to that passage.

1 CORINTHIANS 7

It is claimed that 1 Corinthians 7:15 gives a right to divorce and remarry for a reason other than sexual immorality. It should be remembered that the instruction that Paul gives in this chapter is a response to a series of questions that the Corinthian brethren had asked of him. We do not have the questions, but we have Paul’s answers.

In this chapter, Paul gives

- instructions concerning the sexual responsibilities in marriage (1-5);
- instructions to the unmarried and widows (6-9); instructions to the married (10-11);
- instructions to Christians married to unbelievers (12-16);
- instructions concerning cultural circumstances of Christians (17-24);
- instructions concerning virgins (25-35);
- instructions to fathers concerning their virgin daughters (36-38); and,
- instructions to widows and widowers (39-40).

It seems apparent that the Corinthians had questioned Paul if a Christian could remain married to an unbelieving spouse. Paul’s answer is very clear – YES! His clear instruction is, DO NOT DIVORCE! He says it repeatedly. Look at it:

- “A wife is not to depart from her husband” (v. 10).
- “A husband is not to divorce his wife” (v. 11).
- “...let him not divorce her” (v. 12).
- “...let her not divorce him” (v. 13).

Paul is being very clear that under no circumstance here should a divorce occur. Although a believer is married to an unbeliever, it has been sanctified by God (v. 14).

Paul then addresses the circumstance where the unbeliever has chosen to depart and abandon the marriage. “But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace” (v. 15). Some have asserted that this verse permits one who has been deserted by his or her mate to divorce that mate and marry another. It must be noted that divorce and remarriage is not under consideration in this passage. We have already documented that Paul has dispelled any notions of divorce, and makes absolutely no mention, whatever, of remarriage. The only reference Paul makes to remarriage was in his instruction to widows in verses 39-40.

The point Paul is making in verse 15 is that if the unbeliever, who does not honor God’s law of marriage, decides to depart, then the believer is not obligated to stand in the unbeliever’s way or follow after him or her. At the same time, he does not say that the believer has the right to divorce the unbelieving deserter and marry again. Paul did not have in mind the idea of either affirming or denying whether that person had the right to remarry. For that we would have to look elsewhere in the Bible to find instruction. That means we would have to refer back to the teaching of Jesus in Mt. 19:9.

The conclusion that must be drawn is that there is no contradiction between these two passages of scripture. As a matter of fact, Jesus and Paul were in precise harmony with one another in their teaching on marriage. Any interpretation of 1 Cor. 7:15 that contains another exception for divorce and remarriage is a misunderstanding of the passage and would require further study.

Biography

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TEENS AND PEER PRESSURE

Rick Tincher

Introduction:

1. We must face the fact that our young people are living in two different worlds – in the kingdom of God and in the kingdom of Satan.
2. They are faced with difficult choices every day.
 - a. **Joshua 24:15** – And if it seem evil unto you to serve Jehovah, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah.
3. Satan's world consists of unfaithfulness, false values, materialism, division and strife, wrecked homes, humanism, false educational system, unbridled sexuality, pornography, etc.
4. God's kingdom consists of grace, mercy, love, peace, freedom from sin, proper direction.

I. WHY DO YOU SUPPOSE MANY CHOOSE SATAN'S WORLD?

1. It is easy.
 - a. **Matthew 7:13, 14** – Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. ¹⁴For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it.
2. It is fun (temporarily).
 - a. **Hebrews 11:24, 25** - By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; ²⁵choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;
3. Because we do not always set the right example.

- a. **Ephesians 6:4** - And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord.

II. CHOOSING TO DO THE RIGHT THINGS.

1. We must train our young people to think properly!

- a. **Romans 12:1-2** – I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service.* ²And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.
- b. **Philippians 4:8** – Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.
- c. Consider the false values of the media!

2. We must set an example of prayer ... not worry.

- a. **Philippians 4:6-7** - ⁶In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. ⁷And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

3. We must help our young people to learn and do God's will!

- a. Today our young are faced with pressure to leave the "old paths."
- b. **Philippians 4:9** - The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

4. We must teach our young people contentment.

- a. **Philippians 4:11, 12** - Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content. ¹²I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound: in

everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want.

- b. **1 Timothy 6:9, 10** - ⁹But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows.
5. We must instill in our young people true Biblical confidence.
- a. **Philippians 4:13** - ¹³I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me.
 - b. **1 John 4:4** - ⁴Ye are of God, *my* little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.
6. We must teach our young people that the church will never be popular.
- a. **John 15:18, 19** - If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me before *it hated* you. ¹⁹If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.
 - b. **1 Peter 4:3, 4** -For the time past may suffice to have wrought the desire of the Gentiles, and to have walked in lasciviousness, lusts, winebibbings, revellings, carousings, and abominable idolatries: ⁴wherein they think strange that ye run not with *them* into the same excess of riot, speaking evil of *you*:

Conclusion:

1. Our young people have many influences; we must counteract the negative influences with the right example.
2. **1 Timothy 4:12** - Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an ensample to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity.

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GRACE, FAITH, AND WORKS

Dan Kessinger

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

How are we saved? Surely there is no greater question. To those who are convicted of sin and faced with eternal consequences, there is no other question. The New Testament abounds with individuals asking variations of “What must I do to be saved?” Today, men continue to ask the same question, though opinions and answers differ. Salvation is the basis for much religious division. Some tell us we are saved by grace alone, others by faith alone, and others (inexplicably) by both grace alone and faith alone.¹ Are there real answers? If one is saved by grace, faith, and works (as we believe the Bible clearly teaches), how do they work together? How important is it that the lost understand the answers to these questions?

Eph. 2:8-9 teaches us that there is a source for salvation and that this source is *external*. This very text has been used and abused in an effort to prove everything from “saved by grace only” to “God gives us faith miraculously,” and it certainly does neither of these. To argue for “saved by grace only” from Eph. 2:8-9 is to conclude that one may be saved while refusing to obey God. It is an idea that is absurd on the face of it, but Calvinism, in its various degrees, has never been overly infused with consistency. Those who argue for miraculous faith are, likewise, arguing against accountability in our beliefs, again an absurdity that stills the very heart of faith. God doesn’t believe for us. Aside from this, to make faith the gift referenced in Eph. 2:8 requires a re-writing of the Greek text.² The grammatical construction, specifically the gender of these words, demands that we understand salvation to be the gift of which Paul speaks.

The force of Eph. 2:8-9 is that salvation is external. Christianity is not the religion of personal fulfillment and development but of grace, faith, and obedience. There is a contrast between the works of Eph. 2:9 and obedience. “Work” is a very general word, defining any and all activities. It is even a physics concept, measured in ergs and joules. The Lord exerted much work on our behalf, and, just as clearly, he requires obedience (work) in response to his commands. The works of Eph. 2:9 ought not to be defined as activity, lest we have Paul teaching, “It matters not what Jesus says we **must** do!” If we define “work” in Eph. 2:9 as “activity,” then Jesus ordered men to do what really they didn’t have to do. But again, logic and consistency have never characterized these doctrines.

Mt 11:28 "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. It's hard to imagine anyone reading this invitation of Jesus and being confused about the source of the salvation. Clearly it's Jesus, not the lost one. But if salvation does not depend on activity, didn't Jesus violate this principle when he called on men to "come?" How can we reconcile the inspired proclamation of Paul, that we are not saved by works, to the commands of Jesus, the other inspired writers of the New Testament, and for that matter, of Paul himself? All of these call upon men to do various works. These inspired men write explicitly of requirements, even threatening the disobedient with eternal condemnation.

It is helpful to rightly define the "works" of which Paul wrote in Eph. 2:9. It is also important to recognize the role of God's commanded works. While it is not possible to be saved in rebellion to his commands, our Lord would have us understand that even perfect obedience would not secure salvation of its own virtue. Lu 17:10 "So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'" There is a right and biblical relationship between grace, faith, and works in the Christian's system. These are more than just words; they comprise God's means of salvation.

The Modern Era of Confusion in churches of Christ ³

"There is no law in the new covenant." "If we do anything to receive a gift, it is not a gift." "We do not work in order to be saved, we only work in gratitude for our salvation." "The Baptists understand grace better than the church of Christ." "The church of Christ doesn't really believe in Grace." "Law has no power to save." "It is all by grace." "If one is to be saved, it must be totally by grace."

These statements were all made by preachers in churches of Christ. If these sound like Calvinism, (the doctrine of most Baptists and other Protestant sects) it is because they are. The last three are read in "Free in Christ" by Cecil Hook, while this author heard the first three personally in our own meeting houses. This parody of grace is seeping from our pulpits into the hearts of the unsuspecting.

This message is nothing new nor even unfamiliar, at least to those who know Calvinists. In spite of its obvious inconsistencies, Calvinism in churches of Christ is becoming more of a pattern and less of an aberration. After generations of defeating the doctrines of Calvin, an alarming number of churches of Christ have at least partially embraced it. Congregations who once converted men out of this very error are now unsure whether salvation is by grace or by grace alone, whether by faith or faith alone. Pogo the 'Possum once lamented the littering of his beloved Okefenokee swamp by saying, "We has met the enemy, and he is us!" Our "church of Christ Calvinists" tell us that we are

saved by “faith only,” but by “grace only,” too. When confronted with the Bible truth on the matter, they claim to teach that people must be baptized. But really, they do not. They stand in fellowship with those who have not obeyed the gospel of Christ, and who teach others to do likewise. If the Bible is true, such folks will be lost eternally (II Th. 1:8). But our church of Christ Calvinists stand in fellowship with them anyway, thus demonstrating that they really don’t believe the Bible plan of salvation. Their sinful fellowship proves that when they teach “saved by grace only,” they mean exactly what they say!

One local so-called church of Christ published policy papers on baptism and instrumental music. We wonder why the position paper God had published in the first century was insufficient for the Norway Ave. congregation in Huntington. Really, there is no wonder at all since their church “teaching position” bears little resemblance to God’s position as revealed in the Bible.⁴ We also notice that the first source of authority for their false doctrine was (predictably) Max Lucado, not Jesus.

Max Lucado writes 'that the human mind explaining baptism is like a harmonica interpreting Beethoven; the music is too majestic for the instrument. No scholar or saint can fully appreciate what this moment means in heaven. Any words on baptism, including these, must be seen as human efforts to understand a holy event."⁵

Much additional error on baptism is taught on the Norway Avenue web site. God’s “teaching position on baptism” states that it washes our sins away (Acts 17:11). Norway Avenue’s teaching position is much less clear, stating, “It **signifies** the blood of Christ washing away our sins.”⁶ Their teaching position allows for the possibility that the washing came before the baptism. God’s teaching position does not. God’s teaching position states that baptism saves us (I Pet. 3:21). By contrast, the Norway Avenue position is unsure if this is always true. If so, Peter didn’t know of which he wrote.

However, the question has been raised, what if a person dies before they have a chance to be baptized? What if they had never come to a full understanding of what baptism is, but had an honest heart before God? These questions are more difficult because scripture never deals with a post-resurrection conversion not including baptism. However, a true analysis of the God's heart shows he never turns his back on an honest seeker. There are times in scripture when he has set aside his commands when it would benefit his people. In other words, are there examples of God making exceptions in order to benefit an honest heart? Yes. Should every believer be baptized? Again, yes. Scriptural References: II Chr. 30, I Sam. 12, Luke 6⁷

The author of this teaching position cites II Chr. 30, Hezekiah’s Passover, to support the false proposition that one may be saved without being baptized.

Space will not permit a full and complete refutation of this abuse, but this much needs to be clear. (1) To parrot an argument as groundless as this one illustrates nothing but dedication to an agenda (you can be saved without being baptized). The “Hezekiah’ Passover” dodge has become an iconic argument to some who had never heard of it until three years ago (or perhaps of Hezekiah himself). (2) This argument demonstrates woeful ignorance of the perfectly legal “provisional” Passover (Num. 9:9-14) (3) We wonder why Hezekiah’s uncompromising calls to leave religious error are ignored (II Chr. 30:1-9). Could it be that these fail to endorse their agenda? Hezekiah’s reforms seem much more germane to this discussion than a Passover rendered imperfect by unavoidable circumstances, and the reaction to his call for real purity is much like the reaction of these very “church of Christ Calvinists” in our midst.

So the runners passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, as far as Zebulun; but they laughed at them and mocked them. (II Chr. 30:10)

Here is where the “rubber meets the road.” These are old Calvinistic arguments made to endorse Calvinism. Are those who make these arguments Christians or Calvinists? If it walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck, chances are, it is a Calvinist. Why can’t Calvinists in churches of Christ be honest about their beliefs? Why don’t faithful brethren say and do more? Their doctrine should be rejected, and the teachers of it noted. Too many young souls have been stolen already, particularly at Marshall University.

What about our attitude in proclaiming the gospel plan of salvation? Christians are sometimes labeled arrogant by adhering to the plan God revealed and rejecting all others. In this odd view, the critics typically embrace some man made system like the so-called “Sinner’s Prayer.” This prayer is notably absent from scripture, having been invented by men. Critics then are in the position of endorsing the man-made plan as humble, and rejecting God’s system as arrogant. These labels provide rather neat propaganda for one determined to do things his own way rather than God’s.

Our denominational friends (and our unfaithful brethren) reject God's demands for obedience in securing salvation, but what could be simpler than "baptism doth also now save us" (I Pet. 3:21)? Strangely, they insist on repentance, confession of Christ, and righteous living. Do they really believe in salvation by grace only? These believe the sinner must do **something** to be saved, but they still say “salvation is of grace *alone*; salvation is of faith *alone*.”

Isn't salvation of grace from beginning to end, and thus the same as "saved by grace alone?" Doesn't "saved by grace alone" glorify God? Is this statement erroneous so long as one also teaches a need for obedience? Is this a serious issue or just semantics? Peter answered this last question quite

eloquently: "If anyone speaks, {let him speak} as the oracles of God" (I Pet. 4:11a). Since the Bible never reads "saved by grace only," such language is inaccurate. The word "only" does not mean "marvelous." it means "nothing else" and not "mostly nothing else." "Only" means "only."

Some justify themselves by protesting, "I still teach that one must be baptized." We wonder why he teaches it, if indeed he does. We wonder how he reconciles Bible baptism to his "salvation by grace only" doctrine. We wonder how long until his disciples logically proceed from "saved by grace only" to "I have no obligations." We wonder why the Bible never uses the phrase "saved by grace only" if it is such a wonderful concept. There is a world of difference between "saved by grace" and "saved by grace only." "DJ is my son" is a true statement. "DJ is my only son" is a lie. Likewise, "saved by grace" is the truth. "Saved by grace only" is a lie.

Grace and Law Hand-in-Hand

Obedience cannot be measured nor weighed against grace for they both are God's plan. Thus, the only way to overemphasize works is to ignore grace. Likewise, the only way to overemphasize grace is to forget works. Calvinists, in and out of the church, manufacture a synthetic tension between "grace" and "law." They tell us that law is man's flawed attempt at justification, while grace is God's way, and the twain shall never meet. Since both grace and law have proceeded from the heart of God, they work in concert rather than contradiction. Can there be no grace in law, no law of grace? Can gifts be conditional?

False definitions are sure to cause difficulty since misunderstood and misdefined words hopelessly garble any message. Most words have multiple definitions; the more common the word, the more likely it has various meanings. Clearly, there are "laws", "works", and "law keeping" condemned in the New Testament. Just as clearly, there are "laws," "works," and "law keeping" commanded.

To support a salvation by grace which is divorced from obedience, the Neo-Calvinist allows for no legal demands for the Christian. Thus, he reads rejection of obedience and conditional salvation into every condemnation of law. But the Bible tells us of an obliging law even in the covenant of grace. "But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues {in it}, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. (Ja. 1:25)

The book of Romans reveals at least three usages of "law": (1) the concept of legality, (2) the Law of Moses, (3) the Law of Christ. In Rom. 8:2, "law" is cited with clear distinction, one law from the other, within the confines of a single verse. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free

from the law of sin and death.” Obviously "law" must have multiple definitions since a "law" freed Paul's readers from a "law." Rejection of law and works requires ignoring this clear reference to the laws and works of Mosaic Law.

"Could one be saved by works of the law?" Moses' law was not intended as such a law; it appealed for grace *through obedience* until the coming of the perfect sacrifice: Jesus Christ.

For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, {and} not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purged, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those {sacrifices there is} a reminder of sins every year. For {it is} not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.(Hebrews 10:1-4)

As proof that the Bible's rejection of works and law in salvation amounted to a rejection of the Law of Moses, consider Paul's rejection of circumcision in Rom. 4. The Jews did not just teach circumcision, they revered it; it was exalted beyond all other laws of God. Rabbis of the day claimed that God himself performed Abraham's circumcision, that Isaac's birth of "holy seed" referred to Abraham's circumcision, and that no one in hell is circumcised. These believed God restores the foreskin to lost circumcised men to avoid the unthinkable!⁸ In answer, Paul cites their venerated father Abraham.

What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has {something of which} to boast, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."(Rom. 4:1-3)

Since Paul's subject is circumcision, the law in question is that of Moses. Paul does not condemn all laws and all law keeping as a tenet of Christianity, for to do so would contradict other inspired writers, not to mention his own words in Romans 8:2.

Those Judaizers failed to recognize the lawgiver's superiority to his law. God may alter, amend, or abolish any law he had previously given, but in a study of the law, the lawgiver was forgotten. Circumcision had no virtue; the baptistry's waters have no healing, but God still only saves the obedient. He does this, not because of the wonder in the deeds but because he requires real trust.

Men frequently take the easy way out, forgetting God in a nominal pursuit of His law. Thus the Ark (of the Covenant) was used as a talisman; the brazen serpent became Nehushtan the idol. In the same sense, circumcision never justified Abraham, God did. But Abraham *had* to be circumcised once God gave the law; if he had not been, he would not have trusted God. Paul proved God was Abraham's savior before circumcision existed, thus the uncircumcised may be saved after it ceased to be. While laws do not save, God only saves those who obey his law. God's grace is worlds apart from the cheap, irresponsible grace brand of Calvinists and Neo-Calvinists.

We are not endorsing a "works salvation." Conditions do not invalidate free gifts as such. We do not believe that salvation could possibly be earned; it is beyond our capacity, pointless to ponder. This is an entirely different concept than the conditional free gift.

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age. (Tit. 2:11-12)

If saving grace does not depend on obedience, then all are saved since Titus 2:11 reads that grace appears to all. Once it appears, if not conditional, or connected with law keeping, why does grace bother teaching us anything? The answer is simple: nothing saves us by itself or on its own. God saves through his grace, and he saves the obedient.

Can we be saved partly by law keeping and partly by grace? The question is in error, so the answers are less than useful. The question implies that grace and works are incompatible, rather than harmonious and complimentary. God saves by giving grace to those who are obedient. How do we know this? Because the Bible teaches us we are saved by obedience and saved by grace, and it shows us that those who were obedient were saved by grace.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; {it is} the gift of God, (Eph. 2:8)

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness? (17) But God be thanked that {though} you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. (Rom. 6:16-17)

And we are His witnesses to these things, and {so} also {is} the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him. (Acts 5:28)

in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. (II Th. 1:8)

And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, (Heb. 5:9)

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. (Rom. 8:2)

By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. (Heb. 11:7)

But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. (Gen. 6:8)

In 1979 my dad received a call from a dear old Christian named Frank Clark. Close to 90 years old, Brother Clark was a spry old gentleman. He had an old violin that had been in his family for generations, and upon learning that I had just started to play, he decided to give it to me. We made the trip to the Clark's home in southern Ohio, and I received my first good violin. I own much better instruments now, but that one is special to me because I really needed a good fiddle at the time, but also because of the one who gave it to me. I could never sell it, but one day I hope to be able to give it to someone else.

I wonder how old Frank Clark would have reacted if I had looked at the instrument I still remember cradling for the first time and informed him politely but firmly that it was not a gift at all. "No sir," I could have elaborated, "we earned this violin by coming here today, there was a condition attached to receiving it, therefore I earned it. Since I did something to receive this gift, it is not a gift at all." Of course, this fictional reaction never even occurred to me, nor would it to any other sane person. How is it that we can understand conditional free gifts in every place but the pulpit?

Faith and Obedience - Essential Elements

The great Faith chapter of the Bible, Heb. 11, proves that all service is acceptable only when it stems from faith. In Heb. 11, obedience always follows faith, but it pointedly demonstrates that all must be done through faith. One may not be saved today by doing as these did, because doing as they did would not be of faith today. Building an ark was an act of faith because God demanded it of Noah, but he has not asked it of you. Likewise the actions of all the heroes of faith were the right actions because they were of faith.

A careful reading of Hebrews 4:2 clearly indicates there were more than one essential element in salvation. In this case, one essential element did not save, until all those elements were present. Is the gospel an essential element for salvation? According to Rom. 1:16, the gospel is absolute; no one will be saved without it according to Rom. 10:14. But having only one essential element, that is hearing the gospel, is characterized as that which "did not profit" in Heb. 4:2. Why did this essential element profit no one? It is because another essential element was lacking.

This verse illustrates to us the need for *all* essential elements to be in place before the desired effect becomes reality. When the scriptures state unequivocally that one *must* obey based on faith, Calvinist hearts are generally not open to receive that information. Why not? Because they have already decided obedience is non-essential, a non-existent doctrine until a few centuries ago. Thus, this unproved, unprovable, and false leg of argumentation is gripped tenaciously in spite of facts. Most Calvinists see every Bible verse on faith as proof that faith is all God requires. If He stated in only one N.T. verse another essential element, would we not be obliged to that condition as well? He has given us literally hundreds of verses proving our obligation in areas other than faith alone. If God had chosen to say faith alone is not enough, how could He have stated it more effectively than He did in James 2:17-20? If God required other essential elements, how could He have stated it more effectively than in Mark 16:16?

We are believers, not because of what we think, but because of what our thoughts lead us to do. No husband can claim he loves his wife if he misuses and abuses her. No child can claim to be a faithful child if he refuses to obey his parents. No man can claim belief in God and His word who refuses to obey him. Believers trust and obey, but some still insist that obedience is "works salvation," as though God is pleased when we disobey.

Likewise, no one can claim to be pleasing to God if his actions are not of faith. We are obligated to obey, not because the law loves us, but because the lawgiver does! Though analysis of God's laws is helpful, we may not presume to know why God commanded all that he did or how each law works in his mind. Even then, can't we still trust and obey?

Faith and Works in the Plan of Salvation

Salvation is grand; it is vast; it is awesome; it is the central theme of all Scripture. The Old Testament prophesied of coming salvation, which began to be fulfilled that day in Bethlehem. New Testament doctrine bases its authority for salvation on the cross. God was thinking about salvation in the church before the world was formed (Eph 1:4), and even the name "Jesus" means "savior."

Understanding sin may help us better understand salvation. We are lost because of violations of God's code of conduct rather than any Divine whim of arbitrary damnation. It is said (correctly) that sin offends God, but one should understand this to be more than a mere "personal" affront. Though a wise person strives to avoid such offense for obvious reasons of self-preservation, there are also reasons *why* sin offends God. It is a violation of law, and it is wrong. "Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death." (Jam 1:15) Sin separates us from God through actual acts of transgressions, not because of God's vague preferences.

Likewise, salvation is not a vague setting aside of God's law. Men become sinners because God's standards are violated; they also receive grace when they obey God's standard. As surely as rules and love may (must) peacefully co-exist, standards and grace work together for the saving of mankind. If saving grace does not conform to standards, would God not have bent the rules to save his son's life on the cross?

Most denominations resist any emphasis on a plan of salvation common to all believers, even as each sect has its own version. They seem convinced that God's plan to save has little to do with commands or laws and have trained themselves to be uncritical of anyone who "finds Jesus," no matter how un-biblically he found Him. One says he found Jesus through faith alone while another found Him by grace alone, Jesus spoke to a third in a dream, but rode in the passenger seat of a fourth person's car. A fifth prays the sinner's prayer while number six prayed through at the Mourner's Bench. Have they all found Jesus? Have any of them found him?

The confused religious world believes in God's plan to save, but they also are convinced that such a plan has no real requirements, and certainly no pattern of obedience. These folks speak of many paths to one goal and call Jesus a "personal savior," a relationship based on feeling saved rather than on Biblical criteria. Where is the verse that teaches salvation by "accepting Jesus as our personal savior," anyway? I always wondered what other kind of savior he could be, except a personal one! Tom T. Hall sounded like many of our religious neighbors, when he sang in the early 70's

*Me and Jesus got our own thing going,
Me and Jesus got it all worked out
Me and Jesus got our own thing going,
We don't need nobody to tell us what it's all about*

Is it coincidental that "me" precedes "Jesus" in each line? In this view, truth means much less than the way I feel, and facts are virtually meaningless.

Religions once disagreed on facts. They then agreed to disagree, so everyone could feel right whether he were or not. Today, they are moving

toward a position which affirms that facts are meaningless as a concept, so being right or wrong makes no difference! But the Bible reveals that those who were following Jesus were one in the early church. There was one doctrine they followed, the doctrine of Christ. There was one church to which they belonged, the church He built. There were not various kinds of Christians; they were only Christians, and Christians only.

There was also but one plan of salvation rather than a series of individual and vague responses to the call to sinners. The Bible teaches us we must hear the word of God, believe it, repent, confess the name of Jesus, and be baptized. Those who do all these things are added to the Lord's Church and forgiven of their sins, and these conditions are all equally important. Though there are as many opinions on salvation as there are religious organizations, the only one worthwhile is the one in the New Testament.

Absolutes

How specific and complete must our obedience to the gospel be? To many, obedience to the gospel is a vague generality, and so they don't understand the controversies over how people say they were saved. Why all the fuss? After all, we serve a God who is neither petty nor small-minded, but he is still God. The Bible teaches anything but a vague answer to the question "What must I do to be saved?" We must be equally specific. So, why do religions give a muddy answer to such a clear question? The answer is that these groups reject specific parts of God's plan, thus they can't afford to be specific. Since God is God, we have neither the right nor option to disobey. If we had such a right, how would we go about choosing the commands to disregard? The denominational world has to be vague about salvation because their partial plans cannot stand Biblical scrutiny.

If the Bible reveals a specific and binding plan of salvation, what of those who do not obey it? Unless II Th. 1:8 is incorrect, there is a punishment awaiting them. Therefore, if I love the souls of men, I may not extend Christian fellowship to those who have not obeyed the gospel. Extending vain fellowship is not Christian maturity; instead, such fellowship serves to encourage lost souls to *never obey the gospel!*

There are two ways to eliminate the authority of a Bible law. One may create his own authority and directly rule against the Bible command. This method is rather difficult to achieve and maintain, as it requires unquestioning loyalty from subjects who are forbidden to dispute higher religious authority. It is only after centuries of religious tradition (such as with the Catholic Church) or with cultic mental control that one may openly contradict Bible teaching.

The more practical method of eroding a Bible law is to camouflage it; make it appear to disappear. For instance, the Baptists would never dream of

convening to remove the command of baptism from the Bible. Instead, they bring faith so sharply into focus that all other commands are blurred. Even though they don't really believe in salvation by faith only (they believe in repentance and confession before being saved and right living afterward), they say it. It is as though the ink from Jno. 3:16 has bled through the pages of their Bibles and obliterated every verse commanding baptism!

This same re-focusing process is on display in various places around our brotherhood. According to Rubel Shelly, the seven "ones" of Eph. 4 are the only proper criteria for fellowship. While we admire the grandeur of this chapter and its appeal for unity, how does it rule out other Bible conditions of fellowship? Rather than honoring Eph. 4, this claim was a flagrant attempt to render other New Testament information invisible by the clever use of camouflage.⁹

Why make such a generalization anyway? The only reason to blur the differences between Biblical baptism and the inventions of Sectarians is to create common ground for fellowship with them. In the process, the impact of the plan of salvation, so far as its being a dividing line between the lost and the saved, is ignored. Objectivity in salvation takes a beating, but it is the Bible, not the church of Christ sect, which teaches objective standards, objective testimony, and objective judgment (Rev. 20:12).

The world rushed to embrace subjectivity for obvious reasons: it insulates error from criticism and excuses failure by refusing to define success. The religious world has also come to adore subjectivity for the same reasons, but with an unannounced subtlety of a clandestine affair. If the target is vague (or non-existent), bull's eyes are not difficult to come by.

Among other things, religious subjectivity lessens our responsibility to obey God. This accounts for the virtually universal rejection of baptism, since it is a highly objective command. But regarding faith, such claims may be heard on a daily basis. Many claim a subjective, miraculously given faith saying, "I know in my heart that I have been saved." No one ever says, "I believe in my heart I have been baptized." It is more than baptism which suffers, it is the entire notion of real, objective, demanding truth.

In stark contrast to society's moral subjectivity and the denominational world's vague plan of salvation, the Bible is unflinchingly clear, focused, and consistent. There is one and only one gospel plan of salvation. It is objective; God's requirements do not change from person to person. If the Bible is true, everyone is saved in *exactly* the same way, not by finding his or her own path. "But God be thanked that {though} you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered." (Rom. 6:17) Some call hearing, believing, repenting, confessing, and being baptized five steps. Others mock us as "five steppers." It makes little difference whether we call

them commands or steps, or even if we have no category name at all. It is more important that we understand that each of these actions is supported by scriptural authority required by God, and we cannot be saved until we thus obey him. If this renders us "five steppers," so be it. Is it better to be a "four stepper" when the Bible commands five?

If five specific commands put us in Christ, salvation must surely be objective, the same for all, a law. Since these five are so clearly commanded, they are difficult to assail individually. It is much easier (and often more effective) to sloganize and mock the concept of "five steps," as though this were a human invention. According to this reasoning, Naaman *should* have been reluctant to dip in the Jordan, because Elisha was a "seven stepper." Likewise, the Rich Young Ruler was right in failing to obey the five steps he was commanded (go, sell, give, come, follow).

Most would prefer to dictate the terms of their own salvation than bend to God's will. To suggest there is but one path to God sounds very narrow-minded to some, but that is the precise number of plans revealed in the New Testament. The plan of salvation is a law, the same for everyone. Jesus cannot be a personal savior to some people in one way and another savior to other people in another way. As much as we may prefer to think that everyone who claims Jesus is saved, we have no right to thus misrepresent the plan of salvation. I have no options except to either accept or reject God's plan.

Obedience Without Faith?

Must we understand our obedience to the gospel? The old controversy which seemed to be settled did not go away, it only festered. Driven by a desperate headlong rush to court "other fellowships," our compromisers fall all over themselves to wave magic wands over non-biblical baptisms. Even seemingly mainstream authors among us have propounded this view,¹⁰ telling us that one must only know he is being baptized to please God. This view is inclusive of those who believe God is pleased with their being baptized as a Christian work rather than as the response of a sinner to the gospel.

If they can dispense with the Bible's stated reasons for baptism, surely we can also ignore the deduced reason (to please God). We should then fellowship those baptized as infants, and if these compromisers can show one verse supporting their position, we will show two to support infant baptism. No such verses exist; this theory was cut from whole cloth.

Faith is the issue, not immersion. If the action alone saves, what about childhood dunkings? When I was a boy, we immersed one another in the creek, going as far as playing "baptism" replete with the proper wording. Were these good enough? When we were old enough to obey the gospel, why not just shake us in? In a mind boggling reversal of facts, those who dignify and

recognize these baptisms accuse us of "sectarian baptism" when we refuse to play along. We believe and practice biblical baptism for biblical reasons; they accept any baptism for reasons invented by councils, synods, and conferences; and, yet, they scream "sectarian baptism"!

We stand amazed at those who are playing games with the souls of men. But many are uncomfortable giving bad news, and feel it is judgmental to tell someone he is wrong. These contortions attempt to justify baptism that bears not even a nodding acquaintance with the New Testament, an attempt to save people without their knowing they were lost!

How can it be that one believes in salvation by grace, faith, and by works? It is because the Bible teaches salvation by God's grace and salvation through faithful obedience. If any of these are missing, nothing can ever be right. Faith is central throughout our spiritual lives. If there is no belief, we might as well had not heard at all. Likewise, no confession, repentance, or baptism not motivated by faith is acceptable to God. Without faith, God's grace is nullified. Without obedience, God's grace is given in vain. Without grace, all the faith and obedience in the world is pointless. Notice how God extends to us the wondrous gift of salvation because of his grace. Notice the centrality of faith from beginning to end. Notice the responsibility of the sinner to obey by living a life guided by that grace and faith.

Rom. 1:17 reads, For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

Endnotes

¹ FF Bruce. *Answers to Questions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), p. 51 Cited in Coffman, Deut. p106 Bruce pointed out the reformers' theme was sola gratia, sola fide, soli Deo gloria (by grace alone, through faith alone, to God alone be glory).

² Adam Clarke *Clarke's Commentary Matthew - Revelation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1824) p 439 Though a Methodist, Clarke correctly construes the language here, pointedly rejecting the notion that faith is the gift of God.

³ From this point on, much of this lecture is derived from my book, *A Cloak of Malice*.

⁴ From Norway website : <http://www.norwayave.org/Baptism121503.pdf>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ *Book of Jubilees* (XV.25 ff) and Weber, *Altsyn Theol*, p 51 f. Quoted from William Sanday and Arthur Headlam, *International Critical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (T & T Clark Ltd. Edinburgh, 1980) pp108-109.

⁹ Rubel Shelly, "I Just Want to be a Christian" (Nashville TN: 20th Century Christian, 1984) pp 89-90.

¹⁰ Jimmy Allen, *Rebaptism?* (West Monroe La: Howard Publishing CO., 1991).

Biography

Though Dan Kessinger, the son of Bob and Doris Kessinger, was born in Riverview Michigan, that no more makes him northern than being born in a henhouse makes one a chicken. Since the family moved back South when he was an infant, the accent never really took. He likes Southern ballads and fiddle music, not Northern Polkas and accordions. He roots for the Dallas Cowboys, not the Detroit Lions. After being run out of Michigan, Georgia, and Kentucky, the family returned to West Virginia to stay in 1973. He and his wife, the former Mary Amy West have two boys, DJ and Thomas.

Rather than endure Dan any longer, Walton High School decided to graduate him in 1981. Ohio Valley College then drew the short straw. They weighed the shame of his having a diploma against another year of matriculation, and chose the lesser of two evils. This explains both his Associate and Bachelor's degrees in Biblical Science. The latter confused him greatly since he was married when he received it.

Dan preached his first sermon in the Spring of 1982 at the Mt. Zion church of Christ in Walker WV. Congregations in Belle, Long Valley, Gandeeville, Proctor have had to put up with him. Since February of 1994, he has been the minister for the Dewey Ave. church of Christ in St. Marys. That is until they find the best way to get rid of him.

Dan speaks *weakly* on a local radio program. Dan conducts gospel meetings and appears on lecture programs each year. He is never invited to these events, but he keeps showing up anyway. He is a frequent contributor to religious journals, but those articles are just as frequently mocked and rejected. He is the author of *A Cloak of Malice*.

He has worked with WV Christian Youth Camp since 1984, and West Virginia School of Preaching since 1995.

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MARRIAGE

James B. Rankhorn

Marriage is a time in the lives of many that means so much. It is a time of joy, anticipation, worry, and anxiety. There are so many things that one must do to prepare for marriage. There is much time involved, and everything must be just right.

Sadly, while some put so much emphasis on the marriage ceremony, the clothing, and decorations, many do not put much emphasis on the institution of marriage. Matter of fact, in our society today, it seems that most view marriage to be a trivial matter.

It is my assignment in this lecture to deal with the institution of marriage. We prayerfully hope that the material presented will be of some benefit to all who will read this lecture. For our study purposes, all Scripture references are from the New King James Version. As we begin we will ask ...

What Is Marriage?

Definition of Marriage. Marriage is a life-long covenant or commitment according to God's law and the law of the land, which is to be entered into by two eligible people of the opposite sex, with the privilege of sexual cohabitation. It is within this union alone that **"the bed (is) undefiled" (Hebrews 13:4)**. One thing that needs to be understood by many today is that sexual relations with any other partner (besides our partner), whether before or after the wedding, is adultery. It is only within the confines of the home, in the husband and wife relationship, that children may honorably be born. A marriage is to be nourished and perpetuated by love. Each spouse is divinely obligated to love his or her marriage partner. The marriage covenant should never be terminated except by death. With marriage being a divine institution, it is endorsed by Jesus Christ (**Matthew 19:3-6**). It does not involve two of the same sex (homosexuality), but one male and female, lovingly united to each other until separated by death (**Genesis 2:24; Romans 7:1-4; Matthew 19:9**). As God created it, marriage exists for several distinct purposes, of which some are self-completion (**Genesis 2:18**), propagation of the human race (**Genesis 1:28**), to avoid immorality (**1 Corinthians 7:2-4, 16**), to help each other go to heaven (including the family, **1 Corinthians 7:16**), to provide wonderful companionship (**Genesis 1:18-25**); and to promote better understanding of Christ's relationship to the church (**Ephesians 5:22-33**).

Marriage Is Ordained and Regulated by God

God, in the beginning, created man and woman. He made them different from each other. These differences, which include physical, emotional, and psychological, equip them for marriage and enable them to fulfill each other's needs. Each is therefore able to supplement and complement the other.

After God brought the woman to the man, He said, ***“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”*** (Genesis 2:24-25). Jesus quoted this passage: ***“And He answered and said to them, Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh.”*** (Matthew 19:4-6a). He then added in the latter part of verse 6, ***“Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”***

Marriage in the Beginning

Jesus, during His ministry, wanted to restore marriage to what it was in the beginning, before man's fall in the Garden. Again, hear Him, ***“Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh ...”*** (Matthew 19:4-6).

From the **Genesis** account it is not clear who made the statement in **Genesis 2:24**. Our Lord said that the Creator is the One who made it: ***“He who made them ... said ...”*** and then He quoted **verse 24**. If one looks at Mark's account, you will find he quotes our Lord as saying that God made them male and female ***“from the beginning of the creation”*** (Mark 10:6).

Who Is Eligible for Marriage?

Marriage is a divinely **restricted** relationship into which only certain ones can enter. Who is eligible to get married? There are three criteria that determine if one is eligible for marriage: (1) One who has never been married, but is physically and mentally able to be married (**1 Corinthians 7:28; 9:5**). (2) One who has been married, but whose spouse is dead (**Romans 7:1-4; 1 Corinthians 7:39**). (3) One who has been married, but whose spouse has been divorced because of sexual immorality (fornication) on the part of the companion divorced (**Matthew 19:9**). All three of these criteria are true provided that he or she is marrying one who is also eligible to marry.

The Purpose of Marriage

God Ordained Each To “Leave” and “Cleave”. The proper union of man and woman can only be achieved by God’s plan. His plan necessitates man to **“leave”** his father and mother, and be **“joined to”** his wife (**Genesis 2:24**). Jehovah God, who does not change (**Malachi 3:6**), hates divorce (**Malachi 2:15-16**). Such a marriage is honorable (**Hebrews 13:4**). If one will read **Genesis 1:26-31** and **2:18-25**, he or she will find that man could not share Eden with himself, and no suitable companion was found. Therefore, God created woman for man (**1 Corinthians 11:9**) to be his helpmeet. God said, **“... I will make him a helper comparable to him.”** (**Genesis 2:18**). God created a suitable companion for man. Woman was created to become man’s complement. Then Adam said, **“This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh...”** (**Genesis 2:23**). Man and woman achieve happiness in marriage by assisting each other.

Marriage Involves Sexual Privileges

Marriage is the divinely authorized arrangement and the **only** such arrangement in which a man and woman (husband and wife) are honorably privileged to come together in sexual relations (**Genesis 1:27-28; 2:18-25; Matthew 19:3-9; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5**). Although their sexual relations may result in conception, reproduction is not the only purpose for such participation. **“Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”** (**1 Corinthians 7:3-5**). That this **“fasting”** is sexual (staying apart sexually) is evident: for after the time consented to has expired, they are to **“come together”** again. During their sexual fast, they did **not** come together. But God, through inspiration, directed that the agreed time should not be extended, because one partner may have a **“lack of self-control”** and may be tempted to commit adultery.

We find that this passage clearly states that one purpose for marriage is that within the marriage each, both husband and wife, are to satisfy the sexual desires of the other. Therefore, one design of marriage is to avoid **“sexual immorality”** (fornication) (**1 Corinthians 7:2**).

Procreation Is Not the Only Purpose

Adam and Eve ***“were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed”*** (Genesis 2:25). There were no other human beings on the scene. Since ***“Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled ...”*** (Hebrews 13:4), then there was, and is, no reason for husband and wife to be ashamed to be naked in each other’s presence, when they are alone. Within the marriage relationship, each gives his or her very body to his or her spouse. The marriage ***“bed,”*** with a husband and his wife, is not something of which they should be ashamed, but God warns, ***“fornicators and adulterers God will judge”*** (Hebrews 13:4).

To Adam and Eve, God gave the commandment to ***“be fruitful, and multiply.”*** In Genesis 1:26-28, we read, ***“Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.””*** ***“Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.”*** (Genesis 1:31). The only other time it is recorded that God commanded man to ***“be fruitful and multiply”*** is following the flood when the world needed to be repopulated (Genesis 9:1).

Marriage Is Sacred in More Than One Area

Physical intimacy, where husband and wife literally become ***“one flesh”*** (Genesis 2:23-24; Matthew 19:6) is honorable (Hebrews 13:4). The exclusive right of the husband and wife to the body of their spouse far outweighs any fleshly gratification from promiscuity.

In the moral and social areas, the husband and wife share in and influence the orderliness and happiness of their home. Under the Patriarchy, in the spiritual realm, God required the fathers to teach their children (Genesis 18:19). During the Mosaic period, the father was also responsible for the upbringing of his children (Deuteronomy 6:6; Proverbs 22:6). In this, the Christian dispensation, the father has been given similar duties (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21).

The Sanctity of Marriage Must Be Preserved

We Must Preserve the Sanctity of Marriage. Christians are commanded to **“glorify God in your bodies”** (1 Corinthians 6:16-20; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5; Romans 12:1). An unbelieving spouse is **“sanctified,”** not in his or her spirit, but in the marriage relationship, by the believing spouse (1 Corinthians 7:12-14).

God’s Plan For Marriage

We learn from Christ that God not only **instituted** marriage, but he also **regulated** it. He said that a man’s fidelity and loyalty to his wife takes precedence over his adherence to his father or mother. He also said they are to be **“no longer two but one flesh.”** In other words, God’s plan for marriage is that it is for life!

God intended in the beginning, and He still intends, that one husband be joined to one wife for life! This is crystal clear from **Genesis 2:20-24**. God did not make two (or more) women to be wives for Adam. He did not make two (or more) men to be husbands for Eve. He did not make another individual of the same sex for Adam nor Eve for a homosexual or lesbian relationship. We find in the inspired account that He created **only one male** and **only one female** and said, **“For this cause,”** that is, because one is male and the other is female. Friends, this is a death-blow to the push for homosexual marriages.

Jesus ordained that a man shall **“be joined to his wife”** (Matthew 19:5), dictating that marriage is a life-long commitment (Mark 10:9; Romans 7:2). Marriage cannot be dissolved except by God’s law (Matthew 5:32; 19:3-9). God therefore joins one husband to one wife for life! Not only is monogamy God’s plan, but in the divine scheme of things, no divorce was ever intended.

God’s general law for marriage is stated in several passages. Let’s look at some of them. When questioned by the Pharisees, Jesus answered them, **“Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”** (Matthew 19:4-6). When the Jews argued that **“Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her,”** Jesus answered them, **“Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate. In the**

house His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter. So He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." (Mark 10:4-12). Luke records Jesus saying, **"Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery." (Luke 16:18).**

Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote, **"For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man."** (Romans 7:2-3). All of these passages make it clear that God's general law for marriage is that it is to be for life! The divine rule is and has always been that second marriages are, therefore, sinful and unscriptural.

Let us teach our children and grandchildren that God instituted marriage, and He therefore has the right to regulate it, as its originator. We need to teach them the following premises concerning marriage: (1) To **"leave"** father and mother which means that his or her spouse is to have priority over father and mother. (2) It is God who joins husband and wife together. (3) Marriage is for life. (4) That second marriages were never intended by God.

William Lyon Phelps wrote, *"The highest happiness on earth is in marriage. Every man who is happily married is a successful man, even if he has failed in everything else. And every man whose marriage is a failure, is not a successful man, even if he has succeeded in everything else."*

May God bless us with strong, happy, health marriages that are built upon Biblical principles and entered into for life!

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PREMILLENNIALISM

James E. Farley

Our study will be of “last things” or “Eschatology.” The Bible clearly reveals that time is, indeed, running out. The Christian age (our present age) is indeed “*the last days*” of human existence upon the Earth. There are many fanciful doctrines being circulated concerning these things, and the most prominent ones are the doctrines of Dispensational Premillennialism. In our present time, it seems that most of those who are members of Protestant, Evangelical-style churches hold to the doctrines of Premillennialism. Many have not studied these things out for themselves, but have blindly followed leaders who were schooled at colleges and seminaries where these things were taught as truth. Most radio and TV preachers strongly espouse the doctrines of Dispensational Premillennialism. There are very-well written books on the market that affirm these doctrines, and many of these have sales in the millions. There is now a series of videos (The Left Behind Series) that dramatizes these doctrines for adults and teens. These are well produced and have well-known actors portraying characters affected by “the rapture,” “the tribulation,” “the anti-Christ,” etc. Common people are so bombarded by these theories today that most just accept them as true without ever opening their Bibles to “try the spirits” (1 John 4:1; 2 John 9-11).

In our study, we will be looking at the Word of God to determine whether or not these things are Scriptural or Biblical. We will ask such questions as Has the kingdom of God been established? Is Christ reigning now upon David’s throne? Does Revelation chapter 20 teach a literal, 1,000 year reign of Christ from Jerusalem and upon the throne of David? Does Matthew 24 teach anything about the Lord’s final coming? Did God give the land to Israel prior to 1948? Is “Israel,” that is established in Palestine today, the people of God? What or who is the “Anti-Christ”? What does “666” mean? Is there anything in the Bible about “The Rapture”? What about “The Battle of Armageddon”? Who are the 144,000? What is “apocalyptic language”? etc. These are the kinds of questions that need to be asked and answered.

SOME SIGNIFICANT TERMS AND FACTS TO KNOW IN ORDER TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE DOCTRINES OF PREMILLENNIALISM

1. *Premillennialism*: A doctrine teaching that Christ’s second coming will precede an earthly thousand year reign by Christ. *Pre* = Before; *mille* = 1,000; *annus* = year; *ism* = a system or doctrine. Hence, “Before the 1,000 years”
2. *Dispensationalism*: A distinctively peculiar form of Premillennialism which is recent, rapidly vocal, and more estranged from Biblical truth. Most modern American Premillennialists are Dispensationalists.

3. *Postmillennialism*: The doctrine that the millennium will precede Christ's second coming, or Christ's coming will come after the millennium; hence "Post" = After.
4. *Premillennarianism; millennialism; millennarianism; chiliasm*: These are other terms you may encounter in your studies that are used for Premillennialism.
5. *Imminent*: This term is used by Millennialists to indicate that the Lord's return is impending and immediate. "*Jesus Is Coming Soon*" is a prominent view among modern Dispensational Premillennialists.
6. *Armageddon*: The place mentioned in Revelation as the scene of a battle. Premillennialists claim this battle will be a great victory over "Anti-Christ" and will precede the rapture. With the turmoil and war currently going on in the Middle East you are hearing more and more of this term.
7. *The Tribulation*: This is a period (Seven Years), according to Premillennialists, of woe and trouble on earth for the wicked and others which lasts while the saints are participating in the rapture and the revelation.
8. *The Rapture*: A period of bliss for the resurrected saints, according to Premillennialism, as they go to meet the Lord in the air. This is often referred to as "secret." Premillennialists say this is Christ's coming *FOR* His saints.
9. *The Revelation*: This, according to the doctrines of Premillennialism, is the coming of Christ *WITH* His saints to assume His earthly throne. The "Seven Year Tribulation" comes between the "rapture" and the "revelation," according to most of their doctrines.
10. *The First Resurrection*: This is the resurrection of the righteous saints, according to their teaching, following "Armageddon" and which precedes the "rapture" and the "revelation."
11. *Eschatology*: A study of last things. You may often be confronted with this term as you study these doctrines.
12. *Hal Lindsey*: A Baptist, Dispensational Premillennialist writer and lecturer. He has written several books which have become very popular over the past three decades. His most famous book is called, *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Lindsey is also a TV personality. He has his own program where he compares the news with Biblical prophecies.

13. *Dallas Theological Seminary*: The “seed-bed” of modern, Dispensational, Premillennialism. Located in Dallas, Texas. This is where Hal Lindsey was schooled under the tutorage of those like John Walvoord.

14. *Scofield Reference Bible*: A King James Version in which Dr. Cyrus I. Scofield (1843-1921) placed his notes on the Bible. Mr. Scofield was a Dispensational Premillennialist, an American Congregational/Presbyterian preacher. Many dispensationalists on the radio and TV highly recommend this reference Bible even today. This reference Bible was first published in 1909. Author William E. Cox calls Scofield, “*The father of dispensationalism.*” Cox adds, “*Taking the King James Bible and adding his own Notes to it, he assured himself a place in the memory of all who read that version of the Bible. This was in violation of the policy of all well known Bible societies, whose rules have been: “Without Note or Comment.” Certainly Scofield was ignoring John the Revelator’s warning about adding or taking from his prophecy (Rev 22:19), for he did not hesitate to pry apart John’s verses and intersperse his own ideas between the sentences of John. This he did throughout the Bible, and, in the minds of many unwary people, Scofield’s ideas are equated with the Word of God itself.*”

15. “*Left-Behind*”: A series of books and movies co-authored by Jerry B. Jenkins and Tim LaHaye. These have caused a sensation among many religious readers. They appear to be an effective medium for the advocacy of “Dispensational Premillennialism.” Some of the titles are *Left Behind, Tribulation Force, Nicolae, Soul Harvest, Apollyon, Assassins, and The Indwelling*. The “Left-Behind” series has books written on an adult level and books written on a younger reader’s level. There have also been movies made. You can find the videos and books at such stores as K-Mart and Wal-Mart. They are readily available and very popular.

The study of the doctrines of Dispensational Premillennialism is a vast one, and will certainly take much more time than we are allotted here today. Indeed, an entire lectureship could be planned and carried out around this very theme. These doctrines can be shown to be false and thus defeated in various ways. For our purposes today I have chosen just a few of these ways. We will look at four basic questions: (1) Is Christ On David’s Throne Now? (2) Did God Give Israel ALL Of The Land He Promised Them - And, Did He Do This Prior To 1948? (3) Will There Be A Rapture? (4) Does Revelation 20 Teach A Literal 1,000 Year Reign Of Christ Upon David’s Throne From Jerusalem? Any one of these, when answered correctly and Biblically, delivers a death blow to the doctrines of Dispensational Premillennialism.

**CHRIST ON DAVID'S THRONE?
IS HE SITTING ON THE THRONE NOW?
IS HE REIGNING NOW AS KING?**

In the vision of Revelation 12 we have the picture of the Messiah being born and of the “Great Red Dragon” ready to devour him at birth! Keep in mind that this is highly symbolic, of course, but it is a picture of COMFORT for the saints of God who were about to go through a terrible persecution. They needed to be reminded of how Jesus won over the devil and his forces; and, therefore, they, as followers of Jesus, could also overcome him! In the vision we have Jesus being “caught up unto God, and to his throne.” (Revelation 12:5). This is an obvious reference to Jesus’ victorious resurrection and His ascension up into heaven. (See Acts 1:9-11). This is just another way to remind the saints of God that they can win through Jesus — who has already won! This is the overall theme of the Book of Revelation.

This picture also has Jesus receiving a throne. Which throne? According to our friends who are Premillennialists, the kingdom has not yet come. They say that we are now in the “mystery age” - the “church age” - and that the kingdom age will come when Jesus comes back to this earth — comes to Jerusalem, literally sits on David’s historical throne there, and begins His literal 1000 year reign.

In his book, *Until The Coming of Messiah And His Kingdom*, Robert Shank says, “Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to sit on David’s throne — not immediately, but ultimately. Meanwhile, he shares the Father’s throne in heaven as he waits ...” (p.33). Hal Lindsey, in *The Late Great Planet Earth*, writes of this view as well. He says, “Peace is available to the individual today as he invites Christ into his heart and allows Him to reign upon the throne of his life. But the Bible teaches that lasting peace will come to the world only after Christ returns and sits upon the throne of David in Jerusalem and establishes His historic kingdom on earth for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:4-6).”

Notice that both of these Premillennialists say Christ is not really reigning NOW. In fact, Lindsey says, “The Bible teaches ...” and then lists Revelation 20:4-6 as a place you and I should be able to turn to and read about (1) “lasting peace” coming to “the world,” (2) Christ’s return, (3) Christ sitting on David’s throne, (4) Jerusalem, (5) Christ’s historic kingdom on earth, and (6) the duration of which will be 1,000 years. Please take the time to read and re-read Revelation 20:4-6 and see if it says anything about any of those things! Really! Do it and see! This is typically how Premillennialism gets people to believe it. People do not generally turn to the Bible to read and see if it says what these fellows say it says.

Let us notice some Biblical facts concerning the throne of David, and let us see if these facts agree with our Premillennial friends.

1. THREE EXPRESSIONS THAT ARE USED INTERCHANGEABLY
 - a. Throne of David
 - b. Tabernacle of David
 - c. Key of David
 - d. These three all refer to the royal authority of the House of David.

2. CHRST PROMISED DAVID'S THRONE
 - a. Luke 1:30-33
 - b. "... the throne of his father David ... and of his kingdom there shall be no end."
 - c. Compare this with Daniel 2:44 "... shall never be destroyed ... and it shall stand forever."

3. THIS IS THE *ONLY* THRONE EVER PROMISED TO CHRIST.

4. CHRIST IS NOW ON A THRONE.
 - a. He sits at the right hand of God - Hebrews 1:3; Acts 2:33; Hebrews 8:1.
 - b. He is now reigning — I Corinthians 15:25-26
 - c. This sitting and reigning refer to the same thing.
 - d. Therefore, Christ is now sitting and reigning in heaven. Not literally on this earth.
 - e. Since number three (3) above is true, Christ is NOW reigning on David's throne in heaven.

5. THERE ARE NO DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN GOD'S THRONE AND DAVID'S THRONE.
 - a. I Kings 2:12 — Solomon on David's throne
 - b. I Chronicles 29:23 — Solomon on God's throne
 - c. Both refer to the same throne
 - d. God's throne is in heaven where Christ is now. The literal throne of David was only a symbol of God's true throne in heaven. It was NEVER intended to represent anything but that!

6. THE CHURCH SHOWS THE PRESENT RULE OF CHRIST
 - a. Head of the body ... king of the kingdom ... commander of the church ... the church is a holy nation. (Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19; 1 Peter 2:9)
 - b. The church is the kingdom for at least three reasons:
 - i. They have the same day of establishment (A.D. 33, Pentecost Matthew 16:18-19; Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; Acts 2:1-4,41,47).

- ii. They have the same body of citizens. (Acts 2:41, 47; Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:6-9)
- iii. The kingdom parables depict the church. (Matthew 13; Matthew 18:21-35; Matthew 22:1-14; etc.)

7. THE TABERNACLE (OR TENT) OF DAVID, AND THE THRONE OF DAVID
 - a. Amos 9:11-12
 - b. Premillennialists say that this prediction of David's Tabernacle being resurrected has not yet been fulfilled.
 - c. However, compare Acts 15:13-17
 - d. Has it been fulfilled?

8. ZECHARIAH 6:12-13 – CHRIST, “THE BRANCH,” WAS TO BE BOTH KING AND PRIEST AT THE SAME TIME.
 - a. Christ is priest NOW — Hebrews 5:6 — After the order of Melchisedec who was a priest and a king at the same time.
 - b. Hebrews 7 teaches that the priesthood of Aaron has changed.
 - c. Hebrews 8:4 — Can Jesus be a priest while He is on the earth?
 - d. If He cannot be a priest while on the earth, can He be a king on earth as Premillennialism teaches?
 - e. Remember, He must be a priest AND a king at the same time!

9. KEY - OPENETH AND NO MAN SHUTTETH - Isaiah 22:22: Revelation 3:7
 - a. The “Key” is just another symbol of David's royal authority or power.
 - b. Christ could not have this authority if He was not now reigning - yet He claims to NOW have it!

10. JEHOIACHIN'S SEED NOT TO SIT ON DAVID'S THRONE AGAIN.
 - a. The last king to reign on the Davidic Throne of the Old Testament era was Jehoiachin (also known as Jeconiah, and often abbreviated as Coniah)
 - b. Jeremiah 22:24-30 foretold the time when he and Judah would be given into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.
 - c. Specifically, the text says of Coniah, “Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling in Judah.”
 - d. Of course, he was not literally childless, but the issue is clear — no descendant of Coniah would ever again prosper, ruling from the literal throne of David.
 - e. The FACT is ... Christ WAS of the “seed” of Jechoniah ... both from a legal standpoint (through Joseph), and from a physical standpoint (through Mary) (Matthew 1:12, 16; Luke 3:27)
 - f. It is a clear conclusion then that Christ could NEVER reign on David's literal, earthly throne and prosper!

THE LAND PROMISE DOES THE LAND OF PALESTINE BELONG TO THE JEWS?

One of the “proofs” that Premillennialists use is to say that in 1948 Israel finally received the land that God had promised them. They say that God did not really and fully give it to them initially, and, then, there was the great Babylonian captivity from which the “remnant” was to come to fully possess the land. Premillennialists say this did not happen until Israel became a nation in 1948. Hal Lindsey, in his *Late Great Planet Earth*, has an entire chapter devoted to this point of view. It is entitled, “ISRAEL, O ISRAEL.” Lindsey states,

Some time in the future there will be a seven-year period climaxed by the visible return of Jesus Christ. Most prophecies which have not yet been fulfilled concern events which will develop shortly before the beginning of and during this seven-year countdown. The general time of this seven-year period couldn't begin until the Jewish people re-established their nation in their ancient homeland of Palestine. (p. 32).

Lindsey says that three “*Important Events*” must take place: (1) The Jewish nation would be reborn in the land of Palestine, (2) the Jews would repossess old Jerusalem. and (3) they would rebuild the ancient temple of worship upon its historical site. (p. 40). Then, under the subheading of “Perfect Parable,” Lindsey refers to the parable of the “*fig tree*” in Matthew 24:3 4 and says that the parable refers to the rebirth of Israel in 1948. He says that from that time until the coming of the Messiah would be a “*generation,*” which, he says, is “*something like forty years. If this is a correct deduction,*” Lindsey continues, “*then within forty years or so of 1948, all these things could take place.*” Then he adds, “*Many scholars who have studied Bible prophecy all their lives believe that this is so.*” (p. 43)

All this comes from a man who stated earlier in his book, “*I make no claim of knowing exactly when the world is going to end ...*” (Introduction of *Late Great Planet Earth*). Well, it seems he makes a stab at it when he says it will be 40 years or so, dating from 1948!

I have given you all of the above to show you that Premillennialists place a great deal of emphasis on the Jews of today living in the land. They say that the promise was not really fulfilled until 1948. Are they right? Let's notice some things about the land promise.

I. Land Promise - God promised the land to Abraham and his seed.

1. Genesis 12:7; Genesis 15:7, 13 – 18

2. Fulfilled! God fulfilled this promise. Notice some witnesses who say He did.
 - a. Joshua 21:43-45; 23:14; 24:28-29
 - b. David. 2 Samuel 8:3
 - c. Solomon. I Kings 4:2 1; 2 Chronicles 9:26
 - d. Levites. Nehemiah 9:7-8
 - e. Jewish Nation - Cities of Refuge - Deuteronomy 19:7-9 and Joshua 20:2, 7-9

3. Possession of the land was UNCONDITIONAL, but keeping possession of the land was CONDITIONAL!
 - a. Deuteronomy 28:9, 15, 25, 62-63

4. Restoration to the land - The remnant.
 - a. The Promise
 - i. Deuteronomy chapters 28 – 30
 - ii. Isaiah 10:20-21
 - iii. Jeremiah 25:11-12 and Jeremiah 29:10

 - b. Fulfilled
 - i. Daniel 9:2, 3, 11
 - ii. Ezra 1:1-4
 - iii. Ezra 9:6-8
 - iv. Nehemiah 1:8-10

II. Some Objections Considered

1. Abraham never received it — Acts 7:5
 - a. Answer—Genesis 15:13-18 and Acts 7:5-7
 - i. Note: “after that”
 - ii. Acts 7:17 — Note: “... when the time of the promise drew nigh ...”

2. Israel never received ALL the land, from Egypt to Euphrates.
 - a. Answer — Joshua said that they did! Joshua 21:43-45
 - b. 2 Samuel 8:3; 1 Kings 4:21 — Note: “River of Egypt” was not the Nile. See any Bible Dictionary. It was a small river that formed the border between Egypt and Israel.
 - c. “Restoration” — Possession was essential before there could be a restoration!
 - i. Israel must have possessed the land, for you cannot restore something if it never had been in the first place.

3. God’s covenant with Abraham was an EVERLASTING covenant - Genesis 17:6-7.

- a. Answer — “Everlasting” does not always mean “time without end,” but sometimes it means “age lasting.”
 - b. Circumcision, for instance, was “everlasting” (Gen. 17:13), but we know that this was done away. (Galatians 5:1-4)
4. There is a “second” Remnant promise — Isaiah 11:11
- a. Context reveals that this is certainly a prophecy of the CHURCH
 - b. Verse 10 of Isaiah 11 is quoted in Romans 15:12 as fulfilled in the church.
 - c. Romans 11:5 — “... remnant according to the election of grace.”
 - d. The age of grace is the gospel age — John 1:17; Ephesians 2:8; Romans 2:28-29; Romans 9:6-8; Galatians 3:26-29
 - e. Summary of Romans chapters 9 through 11 ...
 - i. The Jew rejected Christ ... is not a child of God because he has no faith in Christ.
 - ii. Gentile, generally speaking, accepted Christ, therefore he does have faith and is a child of God.
 - iii. Jew in the flesh is NO LONGER “the seed of Abraham” in God’s sight, but any person — in any nation (including fleshly Jews) who believes and submits to God’s righteousness is “the seed of Abraham” — Galatians 3:26-29
 - iv. Joel 2:28-32 and Acts chapter 2

III. God Rejected the Jews as a Nation - as His Chosen People

1. Jeremiah 19:1-11 — “... broken like potter’s vessel ... cannot be made whole again ...”
2. Jeremiah 22:28-30 compared with Matthew 1:12, 16 — No man of the seed of Coniah (Jechoniah) can have a prosperous “rule” in Jerusalem. Christ is of the seed of Coniah. Christ’s reign is not in Jerusalem — not a physical kingdom, but He reigns at the right hand of God in Heaven.
3. Amos 8:1-5, 9 compared with Matthew 27:44-45 — God will bring an end to “Israel,” and the new moons and sabbaths, when the sun does down at noon.
4. Matthew 21:33-46 and 1 Peter 2:5-10; Galatians 3:26-29
5. Matthew 23:36-39 — Matthew 24 — the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish economy!

IV. But, Didn’t God Say That Israel Would Not Be a Nation Again? Yet They Are a Nation!

1. Not really! Present day “Israel” is NOT the kingdom of God. It is not the kingdom of Old Testament prophecy, and it is not a restoration on the part of God of anything in the Bible!
2. Consider the following:

ISRAEL TODAY

- a. No law (covenant)
- b. No Priests
- c. No High Priest
- d. No King
- e. No Lineage (No Tribal Identity)

“ISRAEL,” THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH OF CHRIST

- a. New Testament - Mt. 26:28
- b. Christians – 1 Pet. 2:5,9
- c. Jesus Christ - Heb. 4:14-16
- d. Jesus Christ – Acts 2:36; 17:7
- e. Seed of Abraham through Jesus Christ
“the seed” - Galatians 3:16-29

THE PREMILLENNIALIST DOCTRINE OF “THE RAPTURE” IS FALSE**Introduction:**

1. Perhaps you have seen the bumper stickers on cars which read, *“In case of Rapture, this car will be without a driver!”*
2. Or maybe this one ... *“Will I See You In The Rapture?”*
3. You have probably heard denominational preachers (Dispensational Premillennialists) as they have expounded upon the “Rapture.”
4. Have you wondered what the “Rapture” is?
5. Johnny Ramsey, in a lecture delivered in 1978 at Fort Worth, Texas, said, *“One reason members of the Lord’s church know so little about the rapture and the tribulation is that the Bible does not mention these matters. They are the result of man’s vivid imagination and the intricate weaving of denominational dogma. Moody Bible Institute has pushed these concepts to coincide with the dispensational aspects of their Premillennial leanings. No one, reading the Bible by itself, would ever find these matters in the sacred pages. One needs help — lots of it — from sectarian sources — to even find a hint of such teaching in any of the 66 books of the Bible. It is amazing indeed that so much of the religious community in America, and around the world, builds a high percentage of what it believes on issues never found in the Holy Scripture. It is evident to any honest observer that the notes in the “Scofield Bible” have had more impact than the inspired words themselves in many hearts in the denominational world!”*
6. Are the teachings of the “Rapture” in harmony with the Bible?

I. Let’s Define the Term

1. According to Premillennialism, the “Rapture” is supposed to be a time when the Lord will come and take his people somewhere up in the air for some seven years.
 - a. The righteous dead will be raised from their resting places

- b. The righteous living will be “caught up” into this “Rapturous Somewhere in the Airy Above”
 - c. The people on the earth will not know where all these have gone; they will not be able to account for their totally unexpected disappearance.
 - d. According to their doctrines ... when this select group is with the Lord “somewhere” there will be a period of “tribulation” on the earth that has not been paralleled in ancient or modern time.
 - e. This is basically what the movie “The Rapture” seeks to set forth.
 - f. It is shown in dispensational church buildings throughout the land
 - g. In the movie ... the wicked dead and the sinful living are left on ... but the President of the U.S. is gone ... Billy Graham is gone ... a long-haired singer on the “Tonight Show” disappears ...
 - h. The movie depicts the economic leaders of the “Common Market” in Europe coming together to try to deal with this problem ...
 - i. One expert (in the movie) works out a system where people can be identified by a number on their hand ... (hints of Revelation chapter 13?)
 - j. In more recent years the LEFT BEHIND series by Jerry B. Jenkins and Tim LaHaye present these ideas.
 - i. There are a series of these for adults, and another for young people.
 - ii. These have also been made into movies.
2. Is there a Biblical basis for all this popular propaganda?
- a. NOT THE LEAST!
 - b. Let’s notice some reasons why the “Rapture” doctrine is false.

II. Too Many Comings of Christ

1. This doctrine has Jesus coming once *before* the so-called “Seven-Year Tribulation” period, and again at the *end* of it.
2. The Bible pictures the Lord coming as on a “day” and at an “hour”
 - a. Matthew 24:36 and following ...
 - b. It is referred to as “His appearing” — not “His appearances”! (2 Timothy 4:1, 8).
 - c. When the Lord comes again, it will not be just a few who will see Him, but “every eye shall see ...” (Revelation 1:7)

III. Too Many Resurrections from the Dead

1. Premillennialism has the righteous dead raised at the so-called “Rapture.”
2. Then there will be another resurrection seven years later (after the “Tribulation”) of those righteous dead from that seven-year period, and of those righteous from the Old Testament period.

3. Then there comes the literal 1,000-year reign of Jesus on the literal Throne of David from the literal City of Jerusalem ... and after the 1,000 years are done, and just before the Judgment Day, there is a resurrection of the wicked dead.
4. Three resurrections over a period of 1,007 years!
5. This clearly contradicts passages like John 5:28-29
 - a. Note "Hour"
 - b. John 5:28-29 is inspired and thus right; the "Rapture Theory" is false and cannot be right!

IV. Contradicts the "Last Day" Passages

1. Read John 6:39-40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48.
2. Again, Jesus teaches that the resurrection will be at the "last day." The judgment of the wicked will be at the "last day."
3. The "Rapture Theory" has DAYS and even YEARS between the resurrection of the two classes of people – the good and the bad.

V. Contradiction of 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

1. Two groups are discussed here: one who was troubled, persecuted, and afflicted; the other who knew not God and obeyed not the gospel!
2. Rest will be given to the one (the troubled) group, and flaming fire will be given to take vengeance on the infidels and the disobedient.
3. When would this happen? They both will occur when he comes to separate the wicked forever from his presence and from the glory of his power and might "IN THAT DAY"!
4. But the "Rapture" has days, years.

VI. Contradiction of 2 Peter 3:10-12

1. Note again, "Day of the Lord ..."
2. The Rapture Theory demands more than this. It demands years – 1,007 to be exact!
3. Either the Rapture Theory is wrong or Peter taught error! Which?

Conclusion:

1. The word "rapture" is not in the Bible.
2. The concept of this Premillennial idea is not in the Bible.
3. It is both fanciful and false.
4. If the "seed" is the Word of God, and seed produces after its kind, and if when you plant God's "seed" you get God's plants (Luke 8:11; Matthew 15:13), because of the information within the seed, the "Rapture" must come from a different "seed" than the Bible, for it is certainly not a part of the information contained in the Word of God!

5. It must be “rooted up” for it is just another denominational “weed”!

DOES REVELATION CHAPTER TWENTY REALLY SUPPORT PREMILLENNIALISM?

*“Peace is available to the individual today as he invites Christ into his heart and allows Him to reign upon the throne of his life. But the bible teaches that lasting peace will come to the world only after Christ returns and sits upon the throne of David in Jerusalem and establishes His historic kingdom on earth for a thousand years.” (Revelation 20:4-6). -Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, Chapter 13, “The Main Event,” p. 159, Bantam Book, published by arrangement with Zondervan Publishing House, 1973.*

1. This quote from Mr. Hal Lindsey, probably the most read-after spokesman for the doctrines of Dispensational Premillennialism today, is one that expresses in simple, concise, and clear language the cardinal doctrine of this false system.
2. We can read Lindsey’s statement and have no doubt what he believes and teaches.
3. There are some key words in this statement that need to be looked at and considered carefully.
 - a. “... the Bible teaches ...” – Note carefully that Mr. Lindsey is affirming that what he is about to say is from the Bible and, furthermore, he gives us the Scripture that we can go to in order to find what he claims the Bible teaches – Revelation 20:4-6.
 - b. We should be able to go to the passage and read about “lasting peace” that will “come to the world.”
 - c. According to Mr. Lindsey we should be able to go the Revelation 20 and read about Christ returning.
 - d. He says that “... the Bible teaches ...” here in Revelation 20, that Christ will once again sit “... upon the throne of David in Jerusalem ...”
 - e. He affirms that Revelation 20:4-6 teaches that Christ will establish “... His historical kingdom on earth for a thousand years.”
4. If you read Revelation 20:4-6 you will find absolutely NO mention of any of these things ... NONE whatsoever!
5. You will not read about world peace there ... nothing about Christ returning to earth there ... you won’t see any mention of the throne of David there ... and you will not read a thing about “... His historical kingdom on earth ...”

6. Hal Lindsey is an intelligent man ... He can read and write ... He holds college and university degrees ... He preaches widely before crowds of people ... He is the co-host of a TV Show ... He knew (and knows) very well what Revelation 20:4-6 says and does not say ...
7. With those kinds of credentials, why do you suppose he could have made such a blunder? It had to be intentional!
 - a. 1 John 4:1 — We are to “try the spirits” — there must be a trial or a test ... a “righteous judgment” — John 7:24
 - b. 2 John 9-11 — The Standard to be used for this judgment is God’s revealed righteousness, the Word of God, the gospel of Christ, the doctrine of Christ.
 - c. Matthew 7:15-20
8. What does Revelation 20 teach? Notice some points to consider.
 - a. Revelation 20 is at the end of a highly symbolic and figurative letter to the seven churches in Asia.
 - b. It was written about things that would “shortly come to pass” and about things which were “at hand”. (Revelation 1:1-3; 22:6, 10).
 - c. The picture, by the time we get to chapter 20, is that the persecutor (Rome) has been defeated ... the devil is utterly and totally defeated by the Lord ... he is not just slowed down, he is thoroughly stopped!
 - d. The picture of those who belong to Christ is a picture of WINNERS! It is a picture of a reigning people, kings and priests, a royal priesthood.
 - e. The key in understanding the book of Revelation, including chapter 20, is to bear in mind that you are looking at pictures! Figures! Symbols!
 - f. We see the symbol, the figure, and we must ask, “What is the truth being conveyed in this picture?” — Remember the “sea beast”, the “earth beast”, the “great red dragon,” the “eternally burning city,” *etc.*
 - g. Here in chapter 20 we have a picture: Satan is bound and cast into a bottomless pit. That’s the picture - the symbol - the figure.
 - h. In chapter 20 we have a 1,000 year binding ... a 1,000 year reigning ... a first resurrection ... a second ... a lake of fire, *etc.*
9. Let’s notice the number “1,000” and how its use in Scripture is fairly common.
 - a. Thousand, in this eastern culture, spoke of bigness, completeness, a totality.
 - b. Psalm 50:10 - God owns the cattle upon a thousand hills. What about those on hill number 1,001, or 1,002, or 1,003, *etc.* ?

- c. Deuteronomy 7:9 — God keeps “covenant and lovingkindness with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.”
 - i. How long does God’s faithfulness last?
 - ii. What about generation 1,001? He need not worry.
 - d. I Chronicles 16:15 and Psalm 105:8 speak of God’s Word which is commanded to “a thousand generations.”
 - i. Those in generation 1,001 - do they keep what is commanded?
 - e. In none of these passages is the number 1,000 to be taken literally and strictly.
 - i. It just emphasizes the idea of completeness and totality.
 - ii. God owns ALL the cattle ... He is faithful to ALL generations ... He expects ALL to keep His commandments ...
 - f. Remember the 144,000 and what we said about them in our study?
 - i. Numbers meant something to those of that time and culture.
 - ii. 12 = God’s people, and when you multiply a number by itself, or when you give multiples of a number, it just tended to emphasize the number’s meaning that much more ...
 - iii. 12= God’s people ... 12 x 12= 144 GOD’S PEOPLE! ...
 - iv. Then put the idea of 1,000 behind that (144,000) ALL of God’s people ... until there aren’t any more of God’s people.
 - v. Of course, the idea behind the 144,000 was that God’s people win when they remain faithful, even in the face of great tribulation and persecution.
10. The idea that God wants conveyed to those members of the seven churches of Christ in the provinces of Asia Minor was that YOU WILL WIN if you remain faithful ... even if you have your heads cut off ... you still win.
11. The text was never meant to teach anything similar to what men like Hal Lindsey and other modern-day Dispensational Premillennialists say it means.
12. These are false teachers, and the doctrines of Dispensational Premillennialism are false and materialistic!

Biography

James Farley is a native of Fayette County, WV, the son of William Howard and Clista Farley. He is married to the former Linda M. Talbott, and they have two children, a son, Timothy, and a daughter, Jennifer Bartley. He and Linda have four grandchildren: Hannah, Ethan, Mia, and Mallie.

Jim began preaching while stationed with the U.S. Army in Germany. He attended the Frankfurt School of Preaching and preached weekly for small military congregations.

Upon returning to the U.S. and being honorably discharged from the Army, he enrolled at Freed-Hardeman College. While a student at Freed-Hardeman, he preached full-time at Clifton, TN. Following graduation, Jim has served congregations of the Lord's church in Clifton, TN; Moorefield, WV; Winchester, VA; Seth, WV; Gallipolis, OH; and Pikeville, KY. He currently preaches for the church of Christ in Crum, West Virginia, where he is in his fifth year of work. He is the editor of *The Mountain Messenger*. He holds several gospel meetings each year and is a regular writer for *West Virginia Christian*.

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THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE

Warren F. Kenney

It is our aim to point out the necessity for positive identification of the church and how it can be recognized today as Christ's. I want to create within you/me a greater appreciation for Christ and His church. I also want to help you see the church as an integral part of the eternal love of God, wisely revealed through the ages. To allow ourselves, through the Word of God, to see the significance of the inseparable connection between Christ and His church will surely generate a burning desire to return that divine love through a dedicated life of service in the church of Christ.

WHAT I AM "NOT" TALKING ABOUT WHEN I USE THE WORD "CHURCH"

Rush Limbaugh has often said that words do mean something. In advertising "Verbal Advantage" he uses the term "power words." The word "church" is a powerful word. Sadly its power is lost upon those who do not know its meaning.

When I use the word "church" ...

1. I am not speaking of a brick & stone, wood & nails, floor and tile structure.
2. I'm not speaking of a denomination or a conglomeration of denominations.
3. I'm not speaking of "your" or "my" church.
4. I'm not speaking of the growing movement away from organized religion called the "non-denominational" church.
5. I'm not speaking of a cult.

WHAT I AM SPEAKING OF WHEN I USE THE WORD "CHURCH"

Time considerations demand that I be brief, so I will give it in the form of a list. Many years ago I was given several books from a dead man's library. Inside those books were several articles he had written or copied in longhand. I could tell that he was a student. One such article was "The N.T. Church." It opened with these words: "What is the N.T. church? The answer is simple. It is the church you can read of in the New Testament."

Now let me give you that list that will explain exactly what the church of our Lord is.

1. It is the body of Christ (Ep. 1:22-23).
2. It is the house (Family) of God. (1 Tm. 3:15).

3. It is the kingdom of God (Mt. 16: 14-18).
4. It is the temple of God (I Cr. 3:9).
5. It is the vineyard of the Lord (Mt. 21:28-31).

All of that is introductory to our main purpose: to see ...

HOW WE CAN RECOGNIZE THE CHURCH

Did you realize that there are an excess of 1,200 religious bodies that clamor for your attention in our world today? At the same time there is revealed in your N.T. a church that began and existed in apostolic times. The question is, “Can I look through the maze of religious confusion and find the church in her pristine purity?” You can if you know what to look for. And, yes I believe she exists because ...

1. She is an eternal kingdom (Dan 2:44).
2. She is an endless kingdom (Lk 1:33).
3. She is an immovable kingdom (Heb 12:28).

Of the various approaches that could be made to our study, I have decided to go back to the New Testament book that tells of her establishment and first several years of existence. Let’s imagine that we live in the first century and we have just received the Book of Acts. After reading it, what would be our concept of the church portrayed therein? In our day and time we can use that same information to help us identify the church. If not, why not? It is our desire to answer that by taking a walk through the book, stopping here and there along the way to gather principles to aid our search.

If I did not miscount, the word “church” occurs 18 times in Acts; the word “churches” appears 4 times. Some of the sections we will notice will not have the word “church,” but it will be obvious that it is under consideration.

I. The Very First Mention of the Word “church” Is in Acts 2:47.

The events leading up to verse 47 obviously relate to the church. This text and context tells us some things that will help us identify the church today. We won’t notice everything.

1. The word translated “church” tells us that it is a “called out” body of people — *Ek* (out) & *klesia* (called). We are not called into some man-made body by some “better felt than told” experience. This is an identifying mark of the church.
2. This text (Ac 2) tells us that the church began on the day of Pentecost after the Lord’s resurrection and ascension back to heaven. Pentecost was a Jewish feast that came 50 days after Passover and fell upon the

first day of week (Lev 23:15-16). A better birthday for the church couldn't have been selected. People from all over the world were there. When they went home, the news would spread like wildfire. Anything beginning sooner is too old; anything beginning later is too new.

3. This text (Ac 2) tells us that the church our Lord established was begun as a result of the personal preaching of the apostles. Many modern churches have as their beginning the preaching of some great reformer. While we admire those who shed their blood, sweat, and tears to begin churches, we must remind you that the human agency in the beginning of the Lord's church was the apostles. Anything begun by others is not the N.T. church.
4. This text (Ac 2) tells us that the charter members of the church were Jews. In fact, verse 5 tells us that the audience was made up of God-fearing Jews. If the charter members of a church are Gentiles, it cannot be the Lord's church.
5. This text (Ac 2) tells us that those who were added to the church were those who obeyed the commands to repent and be baptized. The terms of entrance are an important mark of identity for the church. If you study the entire book of Acts, you will find out all that was involved in obeying the gospel. Any church with different terms of admission cannot be the Lord's church.
6. This text (Ac 2) tells us that those who obeyed the gospel continued steadfastly (Vs 42). I only mention that because there are two churches in my hometown. Their buildings used to be almost straight across the street from each other. One of them continues steadfastly while the other only holds services 2 or 3 times a year (a fact I found appealing as a boy, but my mother was not impressed). If they do not continue steadfastly in the things mentioned in Acts 2:42, they are not the Lord's church.

II. Our Next Stopping Place Is Acts 4:32-37.

Usually, when we point out identifying marks of the N.T. church, we mention such things as are normally mentioned in any class book on the subject. Those things include such things as its establishment, its names, its government, its terms of entrance, its worship, its creed, its unity, and its message. Every one of these things is vital. However, in this text we see a demonstration of the only trait that our Lord explicitly specified as a mark of His followers. I find it strange that most sermons on the identity of the church that I have heard don't mention this one. The trait I'm speaking of, of course, is love (Jn. 13:35). This scares me in light of how we sometimes behave, but if we don't love one another, we cannot be the Lord's church

III. Our Next Stopping Place Is Acts 8:1-4.

Here we see the “missionary mindedness” of the Lord’s church. They took the spreading of the gospel personally (Ac 8:4) and also supported missionaries (Ac 13:2-4). If it isn’t missionary minded it cannot possibly be the Lord’s church.

IV. Our Next Stop Is at the Jerusalem Conference of Acts 15.

Not everyone in the first century was satisfied with the gospel message so they tried to hitch the Law of Moses to it. Paul, commenting on these men in Gal 2:5 said, “To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.”

There are two things to be gleaned here:

1. They were concerned with doctrinal purity — it was not an “anything goes” fellowship.
2. They maintained unity that was based on God’s word.

V. Our Next Stop Is Acts 16:9, Where Paul Has a Vision We Call “the Macedonian Call.”

The man cried, “Come over into Macedonia and help us.” Paul left immediately, and, upon arrival, he preached the gospel. The early church knew that man’s number one problem is the sin problem. They knew his greatest need was to hear the gospel. If we haven’t learned this, and do not act upon it, what right do we have to be called “the Lord’s church?” If what you are examining has no interest in getting the saving message to those who need “help,” look elsewhere for the N.T. church.

VI. Our Next Stop Is on Mars Hill (Acts 17:23) Where We See the Importance of True Worship.

Many years ago, Ted Waller wrote a book entitled, *Worship That Leads Men Upward*. That title serves as a very timely reminder, *i.e.* God does not accept worship that does not lead men upward.

Some examples are pertinent:

1. Will worship (Col 2:23) doesn’t lead men upward — this is to worship in a man-designed way.
2. Vain worship (Mt 15:19) will not lead men upward.

3. Ignorant worship (Ac 17:23) does not lead men upward. Paul made an issue of worship because Jesus made an issue of it (Jn 4:23-24). If it does not worship in spirit and truth, it cannot be the Lord's church.

Conclusion

Of what we've said, here is the sum — the Book of Acts reveals several things we must know to recognize the church:

1. It is a called-out body.
2. It began on Pentecost.
3. It was begun as a result of personal apostolic preaching.
4. Its charter members were Jews.
5. Those added had obeyed the gospel.
6. They continued steadfastly.
7. It is to be known for love.
8. It is missionary minded.
9. It knows man's number one problem is sin.
10. It will worship in spirit and truth.

Biography

Warren F. Kenney was born in Monroe County, Ohio July 11, 1944. On May 25, 1965, he married the former Kay E. Stonebraker of Westerville, Ohio. They have three children: David of Cleveland, Ohio, Hazel of Centralia, Illinois, and Sherry of Martinsburg, West Virginia. They have four grandchildren.

Warren was baptized in 1958 by the late C. W. Rock of Hundred, West Virginia. He graduated from the Nashville School of Preaching in 1970. He has done located work in Tennessee, West Virginia, Ohio, and Illinois. He is in his eighteenth year with the church in Martinsburg, West Virginia.

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DIVORCE

James B. Rankhorn

The subject of divorce is a very emotionally charged discussion. Whenever emotions are at a high level, analytical analysis often suffers. Therefore, there is a need to carefully and prayerfully consider a rather wide range of factors that bear on a complete Biblical understanding of this subject. When the Bible is considered as a whole, and common sense is unflaggingly applied, answers will be forthcoming that can be both readily understood and cogently defended.

Considerations from the Old Testament

To obtain the basis necessary to understand divorce, Jesus looked back to the Old Testament (**Matthew 19:4-5**). It is from there that the foundation must first be developed that will allow a proper understanding of New Testament teachings.

A look back at the Old Testament reveals that there are two key words used in discussion of divorce. One of those words is *KERITHUTH* and means “cutting off,” and the other is *SHALACH* which means “sending away.” The most significant passage where *KERITHUTH* is found is in **Deuteronomy 24:1-4**, and the most enlightening use of *SHALACH* is found in **Malachi 2:16**.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is the passage that Jesus uses in dealing with the Pharisees in **Matthew 19:1-9**. It deserves special attention for this reason, and because its true meaning has been obscured by older translations. We ask you to compare this passage in the King James Version and American Standard Version to its rendering in the New King James Version and the New American Standard Bible. One will find that when the passage is viewed first from the King James or the American Standard that the impression can be easily conveyed that these verses legislate and even command divorce. However, when the New King James Version and New American Standard versions are consulted, there appears a very obvious difference in what is said about divorce. In this case, the newer renderings more accurately reflect the Hebrew of the passage and correctly show that this passage does not command divorce, but merely mentions it as something that happens on occasion.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 contemplates a ruling that is commanded after a series of conditions are first presented. In other words, the command is found in **verse 4**; the first three verses only present the case under consideration to which the command applies. Therefore, the passage does not command divorce, neither does it pass a favorable ruling on divorce. This section relates

to divorce only as an acknowledgement of its possible existence as a contributing factor in a case that might come before a Jewish court.

Malachi 2:16 is the second passage under consideration. This passage reinforces the conclusions that are drawn from **Deuteronomy 24:1-4**. ***“For the LORD God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one's garment with violence,” Says the LORD of hosts. “Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously.”*** The simple fact is that **God hates divorce!** At the very least, divorce represents the most basic of failures in a marriage by at least one partner. At worst, divorce represents a complete fundamental breakdown of both husband and wife. God never did approve of divorce, nor did He ever command its acceptability within a marriage that had not been marred by fornication. Within the immediate context of **Malachi 2:16**, there is found another factor that is of great significance in gaining a true picture of divorce. **Malachi 2:14** makes known the presence of a covenant as a part of a marriage relationship. This fact, along with the teaching of **Proverbs 2:17**, shows that marriage involves a covenant relationship between God, a husband, and a wife. ***“Yet you say, “For what reason?” Because the LORD has been witness Between you and the wife of your youth, With whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion And your wife by covenant.” “Who forsakes the companion of her youth, And forgets the covenant of her God.”***

Since marriage is a covenant relationship involving three parties, divorce must deal with each one before it could ever hope to find divine approval. Divorce is not just something between a husband and a wife, even as marriage is not just between its human participants. Now that divorce has been considered from two passages where the practice is explicitly discussed, an examination needs to be made of passages that have implied teaching on the subject in them. While the first two chapters of **Genesis** do not explicitly mention divorce, Jesus showed that they make the most meaningful contributions of all to understanding divorce. Jesus made it known that, even though under Moses divorce was permitted, from the beginning such was not the case. ***“And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’?” (Matthew 19:4-5). “They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?” He said to them, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.” (Matthew 19:7-8).***

In light of this, the question becomes, *“What was so from the beginning?”* In the beginning God made mankind as male and female (**Genesis 1:27**). The fact that mankind is so made is developed through the entire second chapter of **Genesis**. This method of God's creating them male and female called for a

certain condition to come into being between the male and female. ***“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24).*** God made two from one and then said that the two would come back together as one in what is later called marriage in the Bible. But, if we are to fully understand the implications of the verses from **Genesis** that Jesus quoted in **Matthew 19**, one must consider Jesus’ teachings on divorce in the Sermon on the Mount. While Jesus does not quote **Genesis** in **Matthew 5:31-32**, as He did in **Matthew 19:4-5**, the comments in the Sermon on the Mount point back to the Old Testament in general and **Genesis 1-2** in particular. This is made clear by carefully studying **Matthew 5:17-20**; ***“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”***

In this passage, Jesus explicitly teaches His audience what He is doing and what He is not doing with reference to the Law and the Prophets. First, He was not intending to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfill them. Second, He made it clear that even a part of a letter could not lawfully be changed until all was accomplished. Third, anyone who would teach against even one of the least of the commandments would be called least in the kingdom of heaven. When the implications of these statements of Christ are realized and applied to the following teachings of the sermon, as would have been the very purpose Jesus had in mind, the place of **Genesis 1** and **2** relative to divorce takes on even greater significance.

Jesus is not contrasting Himself to Moses in the Sermon on the Mount. Before all was accomplished He could not tell people to forget even the least aspects of the Law and the Prophets. He could not on the one hand annul the Law of Moses and on the other hand be one who lived perfectly under the Law of Moses. What Jesus did was to contrast Pharisaic interpretations of the Law and the Prophets to His full understanding of the implications of those Old Testament teachings.

Since the statements of **Matthew 5:31-32** are not explicitly found in the Old Testament, it must be implied by the Law and the Prophets that they are seen in a full or fulfilled sense. Therefore, the exception clause Jesus gives cannot be at odds with a fair appraisal of what the Old Testament implied. Where would one expect to find the explicit teaching that led Jesus to draw such a conclusion about divorce and the exception clause He gives? Would

this not be answered by **Matthew 19:4-5** and its use of **Genesis 1** and **2**? Would not **Matthew 19:8** set the stage for what Jesus said in **Matthew 19:9** and establish that the latter was implied by the former condition at the beginning?

Jesus' teaching on divorce in **Matthew 5:31-32** could not change even the smallest aspect of Moses. As we have seen, Moses did not command divorce in **Deuteronomy 24**, he merely spoke to the point of its existence. Moses did, however, record material older than Israel and the theocracy that came into being through the laws given from Sinai to the Plain of Moab. The ancient record is the material from which Jesus drew in both the Sermon on the Mount and in His response to the question of the Pharisees in **Matthew 19**.

Realizing this becomes very important for the definition of divorce. The only thing that can allow the breaking of a marriage covenant in a way that would be acceptable to God would be if the very heart of the relationship, the two becoming one flesh, was prostituted by one party outside the marriage bond. That which **Genesis** teaches explicitly about marriage as a coming together of two to be one implies that divorce may be based only upon a breakdown at this most intimate and fundamental level of marriage.

Thus, Jesus was not giving something He pulled "*out of the blue*" when He spoke on the subject of divorce. Jesus, by His own assertion (**Matthew 5:17-20**), was bringing out the fullness of what had already been revealed. Even as the command not to murder implied the need to avoid provocative speech (**Matthew 5:21-22**), so God's teaching about marriage implied that Moses' permitting divorce was not a command to divorce simply for any reason. The full truth of God's revelation could not authorize divorce to one who had been betrayed at the most basic level of marriage.

Also, Jesus' insistence of going to the beginning for the final word on divorce shows that some aspects of the Law of Moses were not matters of approval but merely of acknowledgement or permission. His reference to material antecedent to Sinai in the matter of divorce clearly demonstrates that what God had not dealt with under legislation given to the Jews for their nation, Christ would deal with because of what had been said at the beginning. This standard became the standard that was insisted upon after the cross (**1 Corinthians 7:10-11**). Neither Jesus nor anyone else was at liberty to change that which was inherent in marriage and consequently also in divorce. Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. We are under the New Covenant, but the New Covenant does not change with reference to marriage or divorce.

Considerations from the New Testament

We have already discussed much of what would be said in this section as we looked at some significant Old Testament passages on divorce. But, there are additional matters to consider to complete this study.

The New Testament put emphasis on the fulfillment concept. Fulfillment was at the forefront of Jesus' mission, as was seen in **Matthew 5:17-20**. Passages like **Acts 17:30** and **14:16** contrast the times before the cross to God's emphasis after the cross. In the fullness of time God has a suitable administration that is ruled over by Christ (**Ephesians 1:10, 19-23**). In this rule, the fullness of the Christian religion is stressed (**Ephesians 4:11-16**). This is no less true concerning divorce.

The key Greek word in the New Testament discussion of divorce is *APOLOVO* (**Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3, 8-9**). This is the basic word for divorce, and it is used in the key passages of the New Testament when the subject is developed. The word simply means "to loose from."

Another word that is often in the discussion is *APHIEMI* (**1 Corinthians 7:11-13**). There is a debate as to whether the word means "to put away" or "to leave." Only four times out of the 226 occurrences of this word (**with the exception of 1 Corinthians 7:11-13**) could this word rightfully mean "put away." In each of these cases (**Matthew 13:36; 27:50; Mark 4:36; 15:37**) *APHIEMI* could just as easily mean "leave." The evidence is so strong in favor of "leave" that **1 Corinthians 7:11-13** should be seen as separation rather than divorce. This conclusion demonstrates the seriousness of divorce because, if separation is so strongly spoken against, surely divorce should strongly be avoided.

Divorce and Word Meanings

One thing that complicates many discussions on divorce is that a word is sometimes given a certain meaning in a particular text and that meaning is then used in every other occurrence of the word. Too often, consideration is not given to other meanings that might better fit other contexts. The words *marriage* and *divorce* are a case in point.

What we have seen thus far has shown that marriage has a certain meaning when the word refers to God's approval of a relationship. So, when a relationship called marriage is merely the recognition of a legal arrangement between two people, but not one that is approved by God, one meaning would be given. The meaning of the word *marriage* in such cases would be different in a fundamental sense from the same word applied to an arrangement between two people approved by God.

The same point would be true of the word **divorce**. A divorce approved by God would have an essentially different meaning from a divorce that God does not approve. So, simply pointing to the word **divorce** and then assuming that its meaning is the same everywhere in the Bible is to ignore the facts, and, in effect, to reduce reasoned discussion to the level of illogical quibbling. The evidence demands, of necessity, that some divorces, even as some marriages, are approved by God while others are not. The fact that the same word is used to describe both does not mean that the word always means the same thing. A brief look at any dictionary will confirm that words have multiple meanings.

What Place Does the State Have Concerning Divorce?

This one last thought needs to be considered. The question is really easy to answer, even though it often confuses people's understanding of divorce. Simply put, the state has no authority except what God has given to it (**John 18:11; Romans 13:4; Mark 12:17**). The ultimate authority is with God and is today expressed by Christ (**Matthew 28:18**).

Therefore, the state does not define the absolute truth about either divorce or marriage. Both marriage and divorce receive their truly authoritative meanings from God, alone. God's definitions and those of the state do not always agree. The state cannot lawfully deny a divorce that God will grant or grant a divorce that God forbids. The best the state can do is agree with God and act accordingly. However, whether the state does this or not, God's law still stands!

We must remember that God created marriage in the beginning. The nature of marriage from the beginning has not been changed. The nature of marriage determines the nature of a God-approved divorce. Ultimately, divorce is approved if it is for sexual immorality (fornication) and disapproved if it is for any other reason. Using the word **divorce** does not mean a particular divorce is approved. God, not the state, determines what marriages and divorces are sanctioned. God hates divorce (**Malachi 2:16**). God therefore prefers reconciliation to divorce, if possible. While God accepts divorce for sexual immorality (fornication), He does not command that people must divorce when sexual immorality is committed. The Biblical definition of divorce is two-fold: (1) When for sexual immorality (fornication), divorce is a God-given, God-approved termination of marriage responsibilities for the party who has been sinned against. (2) When for any reason besides fornication, divorce is a human innovation lacking God's approval and terminating none of the covenant obligations of either party involved.

With divorce being as prominent in our society as it is, the temptation is to lessen the seriousness the Bible clearly associates with the practice. An

ingenious wresting of the Scriptures must not be substituted for the only Biblically approved way of looking at the meaning of divorce.

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THE CHRISTIAN HOME

Roger A. Rush

Television can be really irritating, especially if you are a man. Men are typically portrayed as bungling idiots who are delivered weekly from the brink of disaster by a thoughtful, intelligent, and caring woman. That's one of the reasons why I don't watch a lot of TV. I am hard pressed to think of one show where a strong, intelligent, and caring man is portrayed in a family setting. If a man is thus depicted on TV, he is usually a homosexual. Frankly, I'm tired of men being represented by Ray Ramano and Homer Simpson. I know it's only television, but I also know the power of TV.

I'm ready to bring Ward Cleaver and Jim Anderson back into our family rooms. They were real men supported by loving wives. They were strong, intelligent, and God-fearing. If you watched those shows, you know what I mean. They represented the ideal in fatherhood. Many of us from that generation were fortunate to have fathers who were like them. Today's generation desperately needs that kind of role model again.

I read an article several years ago under the title: *He's Killing His Family*, which I think ought to resonate with anyone who is really concerned with the family and what is required of husbands and fathers.¹

Men, are you killing your family? A real life horror story played out on the West Coast in April of 1989. A 28-year old father of three became the object of a manhunt in the wake of seven murders. Among the deaths were the man's wife and two of his three daughters. The surviving three-year-old daughter was alive only because she was rescued from a trash dump where she had been left with a slashed throat.

Captured in Mexico, Ramon Salcido confessed to the murders in a television interview but said he had no regrets about what he did. He is now on death row in San Quentin State Prison (San Quentin, CA).

How could anyone kill his own family? How could one ever feel justified in doing it? How could he deny any regret over it?

We are baffled by such things, but may I suggest there are other horror stories acted out every day. Here the wrongdoers are respected, honored, and imitated! Some examples:

- A too busy father never makes it to his children's ballgames, plays, or school open house events.

- A philandering papa destroys his marriage, teaches his daughter to distrust men, and his son to doubt the viability of marriage and family.
- An always too tired dad doesn't have the energy to play with his children or to help with their homework.
- A career-driven father forgets that he has a wife and is married to his desk rather than her.

What happens to these men? They are not arrested. They are promoted! They are not punished for their neglect. They are featured in the company newsletter as examples of devotion and efficiency! They are not reprimanded. They get raises!

What are they really doing? They are killing their families! What happens to the family? A wife is starved to death, emotionally. Children grow up as strangers to the males who sired them. A therapist becomes the wife's confidant and helper. A coach or teacher may fill the parental role which belongs to a father. Families die in the process, disintegrate, and lose their identity!

Before it's too late, we might ask: *If I live to be 70, what will I consider the most significant achievement of my life?* It will not be diplomas, an impressive resume, salary, or awards for community service. What will really matter is the ability to look back over a loving, secure marriage and know the joys of children and grandchildren; or, for those without children, the knowledge that you invested in the people around you!

No matter what we achieve in this life, when it draws to a close, family and faith will be all that really matters. That being the case, shouldn't those things be the areas we give the greatest attention?

We desperately need real men to head the home and lead the family.

- ***A real man loves his family.*** Paul challenged husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25).
- ***A real man will not permit work or hobbies to come before God and family.*** When a man is a real man, love of family will never be in doubt!
- ***Real men lead their homes.*** Many women find themselves placed in a leadership role because their husbands have abdicated their leadership position. Again, the Scriptures demand, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord"

(Colossians 3:18). But, it's hard to submit when the man of the house is still a boy!

- **Real men take an active role in child rearing.** It is not by accident that fathers are warned: "...provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). The Divine plan for the family demands an active role for fathers. Real men see this as a privilege, not a duty.
- **Real men provide a spiritual foundation for the home.** God said of Abraham: "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment..." (Genesis 18:19). What does God know about us?

The challenge is to lead our homes like Abraham - Gen. 18:19. Like Joshua, make a decision for ourselves and our families to follow God - Josh. 24:15. Determine to heed the call of the apostle. Get involved in your family and bring your children up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 4:6). Ladies, let me encourage you to help them achieve this most important of all goals for the family.

Christian Barnard tells his sad story in his book *One Life*.

It was a bright April morning when I drove out of Minneapolis. It seemed a century since I had first arrived there, a time longer than all the years before it. In New York I put the car in a boat and caught a plane for Cape Town. A northwest wind was blowing when we came over the sea with the waves close below.

My wife was there with the children. I had not written much in the last two months, yet I was unprepared for her greeting, "Why did you come back?" There was no longer a smile in her eyes. Oh God, I thought, I've made the most terrible mistake of my life. "Don't look so surprised," she said. "We gave you up. We decided you were never coming back." I responded, "It was only a little delay. I wrote you about it." "No, you wrote once to say you weren't coming home." "We were building valves, aortic valves," he answered. "No, you were building a family. That is, you were until you dumped it into my lap," she said bitterly. "We have ceased to exist for you." I wanted to say I'd come home because I loved my children and I believed I loved her. I wanted to because I felt it, but what could I say now that would not sound meaningless.²

I cannot help but wonder how many others, not as famous as Christian Barnard, are guilty of the same mistake. Wrapped up in life's work, they are blinded to the fact that it spells the family's death. Nothing is worth that! No

work is so important that the family must be sacrificed, yet it happens all the time!

The home is the first institution ordained by God (Genesis 2:18-24), and it has been plagued with heartache almost from the beginning. We should not be surprised that this is still the case.

There is hardly a family which has not known the heartache and disappointment associated with a troubled home, be it a troubled marriage or unruly and rebellious children. For Christians no heartbreak is greater than that experienced when a child leaves the Lord.

Let me say at the outset that I believe it is possible for parents to do everything within their ability to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and still see them walk away. Proverbs 22:6 conveys a general principle, but not a hard and fast rule. Otherwise, every wayward child could blame his/her parents for errant ways. Personal accountability becomes a thing of the past, and no one is responsible for his/her mistakes. It is a matter of genetics, environment, etc. and we are left to embrace the concept of original sin. The fact is that people ultimately make personal choices and then face the consequences of those choices.

There are things we can do to make our homes better. Make your home a haven (refuge, sanctuary, safe place). It can be done only when we follow biblical principles.

Commit to the permanency and stability of marriage. God intended one man and one woman to unite their lives in the bonds of holy wedlock for life (Genesis 2:18-24). Marriage was clearly intended to be an “until death doth us part” proposition (Matthew 19:1-9; Romans 7:2, 1 Corinthians 7:39).

Recognize the purpose of the home. That can be accomplished only when we look to the Scriptures for understanding.

The home should be the place where religious values are instilled. Religious instruction is, first and foremost, relegated to the home (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; 2 Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 6:4). The church and Christian education can never replace the home. Both may support the efforts on the home front, but neither can serve as a substitute for the home in teaching the word of God to our children.

It is in the home that moral and ethical values are instilled. It is here that lessons concerning right and wrong are first taught. Such things as honesty, integrity, and truth must be conveyed by word and example. It's not that we fail to tell children the difference between right and wrong. The failure

comes in not living what is taught. Children are perceptive. They see through the hypocrisy.

How can a father possibly teach his son about the evils of alcohol when every time the youngster goes to the refrigerator for milk he must reach around his father's beer? How can a mother punish her daughter for smoking the cigarette butt she discarded? We cannot teach it if we do not live it!

The home is where respect for others is taught. It begins with respect for one's parents. "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise" (Ephesians 6:4).

See a child who has a proper respect for parents, and you will see a child who will respect teachers, laws, and God. See a child without respect for parents, and you will see a child without respect for anyone or anything. One restaurant owner recently posted a sign in his establishment calling for children of all ages to speak with their indoor voices and behave properly.

The home is where discipline is applied (Hebrews 12:9). Therefore, the home is the place where discipline must first be exercised. By discipline is meant "correction and instruction." A home without discipline is a home without love (Hebrews 12:5-8).

Some of the tragic stories which were eluded to earlier can be directly traced to a failure to discipline. Eli's sons were wicked and vile, in part, because "he restrained them not" (1 Samuel 3:13). David's son, Adonijah, was unwilling to bow to the wishes of his father because "his father had never interfered with him by asking, "Why do you behave as you do?" (1 Kings 1:6). Samuel's sons walked not in the ways of their father (1 Samuel 8:3). Could it be that Samuel was so busy doing the Lord's work that he neglected one of the most important works any man of God is called to do? Samuel failed to discipline his sons! No book of the Bible gives more emphasis to the importance of discipline in child rearing than Proverbs (13:24; 22:15; 23:13, 14; 29:15). None of these passages can be construed to justify child abuse, but I am quick to point out that the greatest child abuse today is NEGLECT!

The home is the place where life's priorities are set. Too many people go through life without purpose. One author has written, "Most middle class Americans tend to worship their work, to work at their play, and to play at their worship. As a result, their meanings and values are distorted. Their relationships disintegrate faster than they can keep them in repair, and their life-styles resemble a class of characters in search of a plot."³ Young people raised in a Christian home will not struggle to find meaning and purpose in life. Their priorities have been determined by God and underscored from birth (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14; Matthew 6:33; Colossians 1:18).

Here are some specific steps each of us can take to make our homes better.

We must begin by providing an atmosphere of love and harmony in the home. We must make our homes a refuge from the world, a place of love, warmth and safety from the wicked world around us. It is not an accident that the Bible places so much emphasis on husbands and wives loving each other (Eph. 5:25, 28, 33; Titus 2:4).

We must make Christ a vital part of our home. In a Christian home there should never be any doubt where the family will be on the Lord's Day (morning and evening). The same should be true Wednesday evening. Worship together. Pray at meals. Sing and pray together as a family. If begun when children are infants, these activities will become habits for a lifetime. If neglected when children are young, it is very difficult to instill them when they are older. It is never too early to begin teaching youngsters the great truths of God's word.

Communicate! I often ask, "What is the most important element of communication?" Most answer, "Talking!" That's not true. *The most important aspect of communication is learning to listen* (James 1:19). Listen to your children and respond to their questions with openness and honesty.

Set a good example at all times (1 Timothy 4:12). Children tend to grow up to be like their parents. They are far more likely to imitate our example than heed our warnings. Success demands living what we teach.

Be firm, but fair, in your discipline. Children need limits. They must know that choices have consequences. Break the rules and there are consequences, but the punishment must fit the crime. Too many parents make minor infractions into capital offenses.

Be generous with your time. Building a home is labor intensive. Building a house takes months. Building a home requires the investment of a lifetime. The greatest child abuse in America is NEGLECT!

Encourage, don't always be critical.

Say "I love you" a lot. Say it with words, but more importantly, say it with deeds (1 John 3:17, 18).

End Notes

¹ "He's Killing His Family," by Rubel Shelly from a bulletin of the College Church of Christ, Searcy Arkansas (June, 1989).

² Christian Barnard, *One Life*.

³ Gordon Dahl, Work, Play, and Worship in a Leisure-Oriented Society.

Biography

Roger A. Rush and Diane Bond, of Senecaville, OH, were married January 8, 1972. They are the parents of two children. Their daughter, Angela Willman (29), is a CPA in Columbus, OH. She and her husband, Mike, have two children, Abby and Andy. Their son, Adam, is a fourth-year Medical student at OSU.

Roger attended Fairmont State and Ohio Valley Universities. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Bible from Lubbock Christian University in 1972. He is also a graduate of Marietta College, with a Masters of Arts degree. He has done graduate work with West Virginia University and Harding Graduate School.

He preaches with the Sixth and Washington Streets Church of Christ in Marietta where he has been since 1985. He has also preached for the Lower Paw Paw church of Christ in Lower Salem, OH (1982-85), the Little Hocking church of Christ, Little Hocking, OH (1978-82), and the Hundred church of Christ, Hundred, WV (1972-78). He has also preached the gospel in India and Germany.

Roger has served as a part-time faculty member in the Bible Department of Ohio Valley University. He directed Junior Week at Ohio Valley Christian Youth Camp for several years. He has extensive radio and TV experience. He has written a weekly newspaper article for the *Marietta Times* since August, 1985. He preaches four to six Gospel Meetings and speaks on two or three lectureships each year. He has had articles published in the *Gospel Advocate*, *Power For Today*, *Bible Herald*, *20th Century Christian*, *West Virginia Christian*, and *Upon the Rock*. He has had articles translated into German and Spanish publications.

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CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Warren F. Kenney

Introduction

In the preface to his book *Church Discipline For Caring Christians*, brother Robert Usrey wrote, “Being an old English professor, I remind my readers that an obvious redundancy has to do with the phrase ‘for caring Christians.’ As a modifier of the word ‘Christian,’ is not the word ‘caring’ redundant? Can anyone conceivably be a Christian without caring enough to discipline? The phrase ‘for caring Christians’ is like the phrase ‘for Christian Christians.’ Why, then, this title? I chose it because the circumstance serves to probe each reader’s heart with these piercing questions: Are you really thinking? Are you really a Christian? Do you really care? How will you prove you care in our ‘say and do not’ world?” (Matthew 23:3)

Yet, in spite of the obvious truthfulness of this, any time a preacher preaches on church discipline the question will be “Why is he doing that now?” I have reached the conclusion that some consider the topic off limits — there is never an appropriate time to preach on it. However, since it is a part of the whole counsel of God, the preacher is duty bound to preach on it.

Back when I started preaching, a preacher friend gave me the book *The Forgotten Commandment* by Ed Smithson. I am afraid it is not “forgotten” as much as it is “ignored.” Discipline has all but disappeared in the affairs of nations, states, communities, and homes. It is an established fact that when discipline goes, chaos takes its place — that explains much of the chaos of our modern era.

Somehow we have got to understand that neglecting church discipline is every bit as serious as

1. neglecting to obey the gospel.
2. neglecting to worship.
3. neglecting to preach the gospel to a lost world.

Someone very well said, “The church exists in the world for it has nowhere else to exist, but the sins that characterize the world must be kept out of the church.” Church discipline is God’s answer to the problem of saving the church from the world.

I. Definition of Terms

A study such as this demands that we take time for some definitions; this will help avoid any misunderstandings. The word “discipline” can be defined in three ways:

1. training that molds, corrects, strengthens or brings to perfection.
2. punishment or chastisement.
3. control gained through forced obedience, e.g. troops known for their discipline.

Broadly speaking, church discipline includes all processes a church uses in training and educating her members to walk in the light (1 John 1:7).

The disciplinary process is twofold in nature and does not always involve a withdrawal of fellowship.

What Is the Twofold Nature of Church Discipline?

First, there is what is often called *preventive discipline*. Some have called this “instructive discipline” because it involves all teaching designed to encourage faithfulness. It is preventive in that its aim is to keep Christians from becoming lawbreakers. It can be compared to preventive medicine — it is better to prevent an illness than cure one.

Second, there is *corrective discipline*. This involves the withdrawal of fellowship when necessary. I say “when necessary” because we only withdraw fellowship when everything else has failed. It is unfortunate that some people think “withdrawal” as soon as they hear the word “discipline.”

That is the last step – NOT the first step. Steps that would precede it would include such things as

1. Gathering evidence that establishes guilt.
2. Warning the offended of the consequences of his action.
3. Making a diligent effort to restore.

This is a painstaking process, but souls are at stake and souls are worth the pain. If we withdraw pre-maturely, we misuse God’s plan for restoring the erring. Some claim “discipline drove so and so away” when it was actually a misuse of the plan that drove the person away.

From this point on, our discussion will be limited to corrective discipline.

II. The Purpose of Corrective Discipline

I am persuaded that we have ignored discipline because we have a distorted view of its purpose. Why in the world would God demand such a distasteful thing of His church?

In John 13:35, Jesus said we are to be known for the love we have for one another; do we set that love aside when we practice corrective discipline? Many would affirm that we do. Let me quickly set before you some reasons we must exercise corrective discipline. Hopefully, this will help you see that love actually motivates the process rather than negates it.

1. We exercise discipline, not because we want people to suffer, but because we want them to avoid an eternal suffering that is far worse than anything we could inflict upon them.
2. We exercise discipline, not to take personal vengeance on the offender, but to save him or her from eternal vengeance.
3. We exercise discipline, not to destroy family ties, but to save a family member.
4. We exercise discipline, not to turn someone out of the church, but to bring him or her back into sweet fellowship.
5. We exercise discipline, not to make an enemy of the offender, but to encourage him to destroy the enmity that has arisen between him and God.
6. We exercise discipline, not to show a lack of the love of Christ, but to honor His authority.
7. We exercise discipline, not to hurt the church's image to the outsider, but to show the outsider we are serious about heaven. The right thinking outsider will respect the church that seeks to maintain its purity.
8. We exercise discipline, not because we claim human perfection, but so we can maintain the purity God makes possible through the blood of His Son.

Of what we have said, this is the sum. Corrective discipline

- Seeks to save the soul of the erring.
- Maintains the purity of the church.

- Maintains the respect of the world.
- Maintains the honor and authority of Christ.

Let us never say discipline does not work when it does not bring the sinner to repentance, because that is not its sole purpose.

III. Our Record for Exercising Discipline Is not Good.

If you examine the record, you will find it long in excuses and short in practice.

When the subject of discipline comes up, we are not unlike those Jesus spoke of, in Luke 14:16 and following, who were invited to a great supper and “they all with one accord began to make excuses.” When we excuse ourselves from doing what God tells us to do, we are questioning His wisdom in giving such a plan.

Think with me briefly about a few of the many excuses we often have made.

1. It is judging, and we are not to judge. This is based on a misconception of what our Lord said in Matthew 7:1-5. What He is talking about is rash, harsh, uncharitable judgment. In John 7:24, He says that we must be righteous in our judgment. That passage makes judgment necessary.
2. We all live in glass houses and should not throw stones. We make that excuse because we think Jesus said we had to be perfect before throwing stones in John 8:7. What He taught was actually what Paul later taught in Romans 2:1, *i.e.* Do not condemn in another person the very thing you are doing yourself. That a congregation does not have to be perfect to exercise discipline is seen in the sin-infested congregation being told to withdraw from a fornicator in 1 Corinthians 5.
3. We love them too much to discipline. Is it not strange that we love them too much to discipline, but not enough to try to save them? We need to view discipline as something done for a person not something done to a person.
4. I do not like it. We are in agreement here; I do not like it either. The question is, “When did our likes and dislikes become our standard of authority?”

IV. What About the Matter of One Congregation Withdrawing from Another Congregation?

What I am speaking of is withdrawing fellowship in a public official sense. This matter has been hashed and rehashed many times. Good brethren reach opposite conclusions. Sometimes, to our shame, we have been harsh and unkind with one another in opposing and defending these conclusions. In the final analysis, what you think or what I think does not matter. What does matter is what God thinks.

There are some things upon which we all can agree.

Just as an individual can depart from the truth so can a congregation—this has happened too many times to be denied.

1. We cannot bid God speed to those in error. 2 John 9-11.
2. We all have the same rule by which to walk. Phil. 3:16.
3. We must contend for the faith. Jude 3.
4. We must mark and avoid false teachers. Romans 16:17-18.

That being said, I am still faced with the fact that everything the New Testament says about withdrawing fellowship has to do with individuals rather than groups.

Of the seven churches of Asia (Revelation 2-3), only one had it right, so to speak. Against the church at Philadelphia was leveled not one charge of misconduct, Revelation 3:7-13. I deem it significant that they were not told to withdraw their fellowship from any of the other congregations.

I am convinced — and it is my judgment — that fellowship can be broken between congregations without an official public announcement of withdrawal.

I have two problems with an actual announcement of withdrawal.

1. Sometimes, in our rush to judgment, we do not know all the facts.
2. If we withdraw from a congregation, we would probably be withdrawing from some of their members who do not agree with what they are doing.

We are on safe ground when we withdraw from individuals; I find no command or example for doing more.

Conclusion

In closing, let me emphasize exactly what we are withdrawing when we exercise corrective discipline. Basically, fellowship is to be in communion, partnership, joint sharing, close association, and sharing in common. What a beautiful picture of fellowship is painted for us in Acts 4:32. I wonder how close the average congregation today comes to being “of one heart and one soul.” It is not unusual for an announcement to be made about one member being sick and another member asking, “Who is that?” Not only is there a lack of “one heart and soul,” we do not even know one another.

Kay and I often speak of all the wonderful people whom we probably would not know if we were not members of the church. Life would be an absolute misery without my Christian friends, some of which stick closer than a brother. I would be devastated if I were not in accord with them. I do not want to do anything that would break that precious bond of fellowship.

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THE BLESSINGS OF BEING A CHRISTIAN

Ben Jones

The late Dowell Flatt once related an experience of being asked to give a short lesson at a youth rally on the subject “Why We Love The Bible.” After just a few minutes of brainstorming, he had listed some 44 reasons. He was then forced to whittle away at his list until he was left with a more manageable lesson for the occasion. One can certainly sympathize with this struggle when faced with the task of preparing a single lesson on the blessings of being a Christian. When one considers that every good and every perfect gift is from above (James 1:17), and that God has supplied us with all things that pertain to life and godliness (II Peter 1:3), the popular song’s request to name our blessings “one by one” seems next to impossible. Yet, some Christians seem to behave as though they were the most unhappy and ungrateful people in the world.

Misconceptions of Blessings

The January/February 2005 issue of *Group* magazine contains an interview with Dr. Christian Smith concerning a survey he conducted called the National Study of Youth and Religion. In the interview, Smith describes Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, which he believes to be the “religion” practiced by most American teens and adults. “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism asserts that people should be good- and that basically means not being a jerk. God is something like a divine butler or cosmic therapist who is there to meet your needs but doesn’t get too personally involved with you, and certainly is not demanding. Religion’s main benefit is that it applies therapeutic satisfaction, that it meets therapeutic needs” (Smith 107). This “religion” is, of course, just a made up term that Smith uses to describe some of the most popular religious beliefs and behaviors of his sample group. However, it does remind us that the religious beliefs of many Americans are shaped not only by the doctrine of their particular religious body, but also by the influence of popular culture.

We live in a very materialistic society. As Americans, we not only own a lot of “stuff,” but we also seem to have a sense of entitlement about the things we want. Accordingly, there seems to be a materialistic focus to Christianity in many places today. In some churches, Bible study has now become a place to discuss anything but the Bible itself. It’s not uncommon to find congregations offering financial seminars during the Sunday morning adult class. There are certainly Biblical principles of stewardship that would do much good for a generation of Americans raised during the era of smothering credit card debt and multiple bankruptcies. However, a few verses from Proverbs sprinkled through a thirteen week study on how to diversify your portfolio will not fuel spiritual growth. That is not to say that some Christians are looking only for

fame and fortune, but there is certainly a greater emphasis on the pursuit of goals fulfilled by temporal means. Consider the following statements you have probably heard before:

1. If I can just get a raise or retire or get a new car or win the lottery, *etc.*, I'll be happy.
2. The most important thing is that you're happy.
3. God wants me to be happy.

For the Christian, the problem with focusing primarily on temporal blessings is that even when he has received the things he had hoped to gain, he will ultimately be disappointed with them. First of all, the scriptures teach that man is never satisfied with only material things. After searching for fulfillment in all that the world had to offer, Solomon could only conclude that "all is vanity" (Ecc. 1:2). Like Humpty Dumpty of nursery rhyme fame, all the king's palaces and all the king's lands couldn't help Ahab once he set his sights on Naboth's vineyard. Yet, how much satisfaction did he enjoy once he stole it from Naboth? Second, we can never keep what we gain in this world. "*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal*" (Matthew 6:19). This world and everything in it is temporary. Finally, and most importantly, focusing on temporary things causes us to miss the blessings that are truly important. The Pharisee in Luke 18 was thankful for his many "blessings." Jesus noted in Matthew 6, however, that those who seek the praise of men will find their reward (Matt 6:5). There are far greater riches available in Christ than those we can achieve without him.

Blessings in the New Testament

There are two Greek words in the New Testament used in relation to blessings. The first term to consider is *eulogia*, which is a compound word formed from the prefix *eu*, which conveys the meaning of good, and the word *logos*, which means word or speech. The word can vary in meaning from fine speech, to praise – as in man toward God, or blessing – as in God's action toward man (Bauer 322).

The second term is *makarias*, which means blessed, fortunate, happy, usually in the sense of a privileged recipient of divine favor (Bauer 486). Kittel notes that the special feature of the word in the New Testament is that it refers overwhelmingly to the distinctive religious joy which accrues to man from his share in the salvation of the kingdom of God (Kittel, Vol IV, 367). *Eulogia* is generally used to describe the act of blessing, or the blessing itself, while

makarias refers more often to the result of the blessing in the life of the one who received it.

When used in the New Testament, these words often refer to things that are intangible, and at times paradoxical. Jesus in particular employed these words in the beatitudes in Matthew 6 and Luke 6. There he spoke of the blessing of being poor, or hungry, or persecuted. After washing the apostles feet, Jesus said it would be blessed to learn to be a servant (John 13:17). In Acts 20:35, Paul quoted Jesus as having said “it is more blessed to give than to receive.” Yet, for many people today, blessings have to do almost entirely with things received rather than given. What are the true blessings of being a Christian? How can Christians develop a greater appreciation for the blessings they receive? Does a conflict exist between the things we consider physical and spiritual blessings? For the remainder of our study, we will attempt to answer some of these questions by considering Biblical principles involving a revelation, a relationship, and a reward.

Revelation of the Mystery

Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. (Genesis 12:1-3)

The concept of the blessing was a central part of the Old Testament world. In the New Testament, *eulogia* does not take its meaning from secular Greek, but rather from a translation of Hebrew terms, as it appears more than 400 times in the Septuagint (Kittel Vol II, 755). While many Old Testament blessings pertained to land, wealth, or other temporal concepts, God’s promise to Abram in Genesis 12 extended beyond the physical realm with its grand Messianic predictions. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were faithful to the Lord. They reaped the rewards of their faithful service as God multiplied their family into a great people. Yet, they all died in faith, not having received the promises (Hebrews 11:13).

Who then received the blessing made to Abraham? According to the Bible, it is those who are of faith (Gal 3:9). In the Christian age, God has finally revealed His plan of redemption to mankind. Paul wrote to the Ephesian Christians that they had been blessed with “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph 1:3). Those blessings were made possible to everyone who believed because God had finally made known “*the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him*”

(9,10). It is not only a Christian's obedience to the gospel that causes a blessing in his life, it is the revelation of the gospel message with a view toward obedience that potentially blesses all those who now live during the Christian age.

In Galatians 4:15, Paul posed the question "*what then was the blessing you enjoyed*"? Paul wrote that the Galatians had previously received his preaching as though it came from Jesus himself. Now, obstinate in their error, they seemed unwilling to listen to Paul's correction. They no longer enjoyed their previous blessing, which was the opportunity to hear the gospel message. This same blessing exists today, at least in prospect, for every man and woman who will listen to the message of the cross. It is a message that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob never heard preached. Today, we stand on the shoulders of great men and women of God who strained their necks for a clue concerning God's great mystery. Do we treasure the blessing of God's revelation today? We live in the greatest age of the world's history because it is the age of salvation in Christ.

New Relationship in Christ

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence (Eph 1:3-8)

While God's plan of salvation has only been fully revealed in the Christian age, Paul, through inspiration, wrote that it was being prepared before the foundation of the world. These verses have been misused to teach Calvinism, but notice that Paul was writing about God's choice of a class of people, namely those who are in Christ. From the very beginning God had planned to offer His one of a kind Son as the atonement for our sins. It was in Christ that God would bless the families of the earth through Abram. It was in Christ that Eve's seed would bruise Satan's head, and it is in Christ that we find redemption and forgiveness of sins.

Paul quotes from David in the fourth chapter of Romans as he discusses the blessedness of those whose sins are covered. It is impossible to imagine a greater blessing in the life of the Christian than the forgiveness of sins. At the same time, we recognize that salvation in prospect is not salvation in reality. God may have prepared a plan by which those in Christ would be saved from sin. He may have revealed that plan through the preaching of the gospel to the whole world, but until man responds in faith he remains lost and separate

from God. When he places himself in Christ, he then has access to every spiritual blessing.

The Bible could not be clearer on how one gets into Christ.

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:27,28). “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:3,4).

When one is baptized into Christ, he is added to the church, which is the body of Christ, by God (Acts 2:47; Eph 5:30). His sins are forgiven (Acts 2:38; 22:16). He is made a new creation (II Cor 5:17). It is because of this new relationship with the Father through Christ that the Christian now gains access to a myriad of blessings. We have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly place *in Christ*.

One such blessing is our eternal inheritance. This concept again finds its roots in the Old Testament blessings handed down from father to son. The figure of the birthright, which played such a prominent role in the physical inheritance of Israel, finds a spiritual application in the New Testament. Under normal circumstances, the inheritance was a blessing reserved for the sons - the blood descendants and true heirs of the house. It was not a privilege to be enjoyed by servants or those outside the family. Consider God’s words through Paul in Galatians. *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (3:26-29).* In Ephesians 1:11, Paul writes that in Christ we have *“obtained an inheritance”*. In Colossians 1:12, Paul thanks God for having *“qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance.”* We were so qualified when we entered the *“kingdom of the Son of His love”* (Colossians 1:13) through baptism.

Those who deny the necessity of baptism deny themselves countless blessings that are found only in Christ. If it is possible to be in Christ without being baptized, would it also have been possible for Christ to have cleansed our sins without the shedding of His blood? Why couldn’t Christ just have believed that our sins should be forgiven? Well, the Bible tells us that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins (Hebrews 9:22). Why was remission of sins necessary? While in our sins, we were separated from God,

with no means to be reconciled to Him. As Paul wrote, “*at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ*” (Eph 2:12-13). What a blessing to find ourselves in a new relationship with our heavenly Father, as a result of our obedience to the plan of salvation prepared for us from the foundation of the world.

Present Joy from a Future Reward

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.
 Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
 Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.
 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you*
 (Matt 5:3-12).

God showers the Christian with an abundance of blessings, both spiritual and physical. The forgiveness of sins, the church, our families, our jobs, our health: these are but a few of the many blessings for which we owe our thanks to the Heavenly Father. Yet, when the New Testament describes those who are blessed, we read of an unusual group of people indeed: the hungry, the poor, those who mourn, those who endure suffering (James 5:11), the man who doesn't cause himself reproach with his own scruples (Romans 14:22), widows who remain unmarried (I Cor 7:40). Should a Christian welcome persecution? Should he be happy when he is excluded from family events because of his faith?

Perhaps part of the difficulty we have in understanding these verses lies with our tendency to focus on the material. After spending three years with Jesus, seeing His greatest miracles, hearing His greatest sermons, and witnessing His resurrection from death, the apostles asked “*Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel*” (Acts 1:6). Christians today are prone to make the same mistakes.

Consider the words of Jesus from Matthew 6:31-33: *“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”* This is a wonderful promise of God’s providential care for the Christian. In an argument from the lesser to the greater, Jesus reminded his audience that God provided for both birds and flowers which are of much less value than a human. Therefore, if we seek the kingdom first, God will provide the necessities of life through His providential care. What exactly is the blessing in this passage? Is it our dinner or our new Sunday suit or the paycheck we bring home from work? Jesus did not say that if we focus on spiritual things, God will in turn reward us with a shiny new car and a Christmas bonus. Many times we tend to focus primarily on our material goods as the blessings God has given us. Paul wrote in Romans 14:17, *“the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”* The blessing of Matthew 6:33 is not just what God gives us to eat and drink. The blessing is the confidence and joy we receive when we give our efforts to service in the kingdom, being assured that God will care for our basic needs. It is the satisfaction we enjoy by focusing on goals of eternal value. A few verses earlier in the chapter, Jesus said *“lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”* (6:20-21). What a blessing it is for the Christian to be able to devote his life to service in the kingdom without worry or anxiety eroding away his efforts to serve God.

Then, by focusing on the things that are spiritual, the Christian can find the determination to overcome the many obstacles of earthly life. He has the confidence that his chosen path is the right one. Peter wrote, *“And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed. And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled”* (I Peter 3:13,14). The Christian life truly is the best life to live. Christ’s doctrine is the greatest teaching the world has ever known. God provides his children with all that they need in their service to Him. But even when the difficult times come, how can they compare to the eternal inheritance prepared for the Christian? *“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory”* (II Cor 4:17). Those who mourn will be comforted. Those who are merciful will find mercy themselves. The Christian receives a great blessing in the knowledge that his pain and sacrifice will be abundantly rewarded when his work on earth has ended. As Paul encouraged the church in Corinth *“therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast,*

immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (I Cor 15:58).

Conclusion

Truly we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ. We have the greatest of opportunities to live during the Christian age and to know through the Bible the revealed will of God. The Bible teaches us how to get into Christ. It explains the great value of His blood and the precious relationship we can share with God through His Son. The Bible supplies us with the promises we need to overcome the struggles of the world and to enjoy our participation in the heavenly kingdom. Through the Bible we can understand and appreciate all of the good things God has given us. We can be thankful for the physical gifts he has entrusted to our care, while using them in the proper way to enjoy greater spiritual blessings through our service to Him. What a blessing it is to be a Christian. May we always receive God’s great blessings through our obedience to His word.

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Biography

Ben Jones is a native of Grant Town, WV, and a graduate of North Marion High School. He earned his B.A. in Bible from Freed-Hardeman University in 1998. After preaching for several small congregations in Tennessee, he returned to West Virginia in 2002 to preach for the Kaiser and Douglas congregation in Ravenswood. Since December 2005, he has been working as an associate minister at the Dewey Avenue congregation in St. Marys, WV.

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REMARRIAGE

James B. Rankhorn

Few subjects have been captured by emotions and been as controversial throughout the years as has been the subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. When the subject is one pertaining to the emotions, when it may involve a family member, and when our desires might be to **“find a way”** that he or she can continue in his or her condition; then often we lose our objectivity and thus the ability to see the truth of Jehovah. On the other hand, we notice that when one loves the truth with all his heart and is determined to abide by and teach that truth, then personal desires and feelings must be moved aside. Let’s begin our discussion with a look at Biblical teaching.

What Is God’s Will on the Subject?

Throughout each dispensation, God has always given man specific instructions concerning what He required. In the garden, Adam and Eve received specific commands from God. In the building of the ark, God told Noah exactly what He wanted him to do. In order to build the tabernacle, God gave Moses a specific pattern to follow.

God has given us adequate instructions today! We have in our possession the verbally inspired, inerrant, faithful Word of God. The **“truth can make us free” (John 8:32)**, if we will gladly receive it **(Acts 2:41)** and obey it **(Matthew 7:21)**.

God has also warned us about false teachers who will bring in **“destructive heresies” (2 Peter 2:1-3)**. We have also been warned that they would deceive us with **“persuasive words” (Colossians 2:4)**. These false teachers will speak **“perverse things” (Acts 28-30)**, corrupt and weaken the church **(2 Corinthians 11:13-15)**, and by such means cause division and destruction in the lives of untold millions.

Satan will use any and all means he can employ to destroy the faith or faithfulness of as many as he can. If he can destroy one’s faith in God, he wins. If he can discourage one to the point that he falls by the wayside, he wins. If he can convince us that what God has declared to be sinful is really not sin, then we will commit that sin and ultimately die because we are living in that sin, Satan wins!

Sadly, many whose faith would seem never to falter, nor would they allow discouragement to cause them to stumble, have actually allowed themselves to become involved and overcome by sinful actions with regard to marriage.

It is God who has made the rules. God has the authority to make the rules, and He requires that we submit to His rules! It is His desire that marriage be for one man and one woman, until death separated them (**Romans 7:1-4, Matthew 19:3-9**). God's desire is that the man and woman be faithful to one another (**Hebrews 13:4; 1 Corinthians 6:18; Matthew 19:3-9**). God has declared eternal condemnation upon anyone guilty of fornication, adultery, homosexuality, *etc.* (**Galatians 5:19-21; Romans 1:29-32; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20**). In the remainder of our discussion, we will consider the God-given conditions which allow remarriage and the Christian's duty toward such.

Upon the Death of a Spouse, Remarriage Becomes an Option

When a spouse dies, the marriage ends, and, if the spouse remaining chooses, he or she may marry another, with the blessings of God. One must consider a restriction given by the Lord, that he or she must marry one who is free to marry. But we ask, "Is death the only cause?"

God's Word clearly states in **Romans 7:2-3**; ***"For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man."*** Let us quickly overview this subject and then look more closely at it.

First, let's consider the Lord's words in **Matthew 19:9**, ***"And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality (fornication – KJV), and marries another, commits adultery ..."*** If one puts away a spouse for any reason other than sexual immorality (fornication), and marries another, then that individual is in adultery, as the Lord Himself has so proclaimed. On the other hand, the one who puts away a spouse for sexual immorality (fornication) and marries another is not in adultery. We must understand that this is true as long as the new marriage partner is acceptable, in the sight of God, to marry.

Having drawn this conclusion from the Lord's simple teaching in **Matthew 19**, we must conclude that death is **not** the only cause for remarriage. God has clearly established in His Word His desire concerning marriage – one man and one woman until separated by death. From the very beginning, God did not want divorce to be a consideration. As we see in our society today, individuals being involved in multiple marriages and divorces was never God's intent. In fact, **Malachi 2:16**, declares that God ***"hates divorce"***! Yet, with all these facts before us, we find there is a single exception to this command.

Sexual Immorality Permits Divorce and the Option of Remarriage

In our discussion it is of utmost importance that we emphasize that marriage is honorable (**Hebrews 13:4**). As one contemplates marriage, he or she should consider this divine institution seriously and cautiously in view of eternity. Marriage, as God designed it, is to be a wonderful and joyous union, not a hateful and argumentative partnership.

We will begin with **Mark 10:11-12**; ***“So He said to them, ‘Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.’”*** This is the rule that governs us from God’s Holy Word! The Lord’s desire is reflected here, and it establishes the guidelines that we are to follow. God has declared, there is to be one man and one woman joined together in marriage, leaving father and mother, being joined to one another until death separates them (**Genesis 3:15; Matthew 19:3-9; 1 Corinthians 7**). If either the man or woman divorces his or her spouse and marries another, he or she ***“commits adultery”*** against the other, so says the Lord! It is really just that simple! No matter what the reason may be: she burned the toast, he leaves his clothes lying around, she talks on the phone too much, he watches sports too much.

Let us now consider **Matthew 19:9**; ***“And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.”*** The same principle is taught in **Matthew 5:32**; ***“But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.”***

The Lord gave us the rule in **Mark 10** and, then, in **Matthew 19** and **5** He gives the same rule but gives a single exception to the rule. The rule has been stated simply, and then one exception was added. From these passages we learn that if either the husband or wife disregards their vows and violates divine institution of the two becoming ***“one flesh”*** (**Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:6**), then the Lord has given the single exception to the rule.

We understand the concept of rule and exceptions of other areas of our life. Consider this illustration. While driving, we must abide by the laws of the land. The law says that we can only drive so fast on the streets and highways. If we drive faster than the posted limit, there is a real good chance that we will be fined. But, there are exceptions to this law. If a policeman, fireman, or ambulance driver is going to an emergency, he may drive faster than the speed limit. This is the exception to the rule, and we understand this. When we are driving, we must not drive over the speed limit, and when law enforcement officers or other emergency workers are going from place to place (not an

emergency), they must not drive over the limit. If they are going to an accident, fire, crime, etc., they are **allowed** by law to exceed the speed limit. This is the exception, but the rule is still in effect under all other circumstances.

The single exception to God's law of one man and one woman, until separated by death, is if one commits sexual immorality (fornication). The innocent party, if he or she chooses, may put his or her spouse away, and later, if he or she chooses, marry another with God's approval, as long as the individual is eligible to marry.

Misconception About Divorce

One will find that there are many beliefs and ideas on this subject. There are those who claim that divorce and remarriage are allowed for **any** reason; while others say that divorce and possible remarriage is allowed for only one reason. Then, there are those who state that one may never remarry, no matter what the reason was for their first marriage ending. Still others say that separation is allowed, and some will say that separation is sin. Again, we find those who believe that the guilty party (a spouse that has committed sexual immorality) is **not** allowed to remarry with God's approval, while others believe that it is permissible for that one to remarry. Then some say that if an individual is baptized **after** he or she is divorced (whether first time or after multiple times), then that person can stay with his or her current spouse, because baptism washes away sins. I must say that one needs to study this teaching further and never take such false teaching as truth.

It is apparent that when one considers the multitude of beliefs on this subject, everyone cannot be right! I believe that in many instances we are dealing with opinions rather than clear Bible doctrine. When this subject is discussed, many times you will hear, *"Well, you have your opinion and I have mine, and my opinion is just as good as yours."* I must say, I agree. When we are dealing with opinions, one is just as good as another. But, with this subject, we must **not** rely on opinions, but we must turn to and follow the truth as recorded in God's inspired Word!

Sadly, we probably have all seen a good brother or sister get involved in a marital position that is contrary to what God has commanded. I have seen brethren reverse their position on this subject because a family member has become involved in an unscriptural marriage. It seems when such happens, that such people will restudy the matter until they find what they perceive to be a loophole so they can rationalize their new position.

Discerning Between False Doctrine and Truth

We must study God's Word that we may be approved of Him (**2 Timothy 2:15**). We must be like the Bereans and search the Scriptures to understand

what is truth (**Acts 17:11**). **1 John 4:1**, tells us to try the spirits to see if they are of God. Since some have perverted the Gospel of Christ (**Galatians 1:6-9**), it is important for us to examine and prove what is the truth.

In an age of subjectivity, there is an absolute standard. It is the inspired Word of God (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**). God's Word is truth, and it will make us free (**John 17:17; 8:32**). This same truth will one day judge us all (**John 12:48**).

Truth can be attained. Truth is absolute. We can know the truth. Truth is not subjective, changing from one thing for one individual to something else for another. Neither do circumstances cause it to change. God has spoken concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage, and that settles it! The only question that remains for us is, ***“Will we accept His law?”***

In Today's Permissive Society, Christians Must Stand for Truth

The faithful Christian must ***“contend earnestly for the faith”*** (**Jude 3**). We must stand against error and unrighteousness. The Lord does not need weak, compromising, faint-hearted soldiers in His army. Following are some facts and Scriptures that will help us to realize that this is the only action for faithful Christians.

God's faithful people, throughout history, have been those who have stood aggressively against unrighteousness. John the Immerser opposed Herod, though it ultimately meant his death (**Mark 6:17-28**). Peter, on the day of Pentecost, told those present that they had killed the very Son of God (**Acts 2:36**). With boldness, Stephen spoke of the sinful ways to those who stoned him (**Acts 7**). Christians were scattered in the first century by persecution, yet they continued to preach the Gospel (**Acts 8:4**). Paul, disputed in the synagogue (**Acts 17**), at Ephesus (**Acts 19:8**), told the young preacher Timothy to fight the good fight of faith and endure hardships in serving Christ (**1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 2:3**), and he instructed Christians to put on ***“the whole armor of God”*** and fight the spiritual battles that were before them (**Ephesians 6:11-20**).

Jesus spoke of His followers being aggressive. Christ pronounced condemnation on those who were tolerating false doctrines (**Revelation 2:12-17**). The Lord prayed for unity (**John 17**). Paul condemned division (**1 Corinthians 1**) and pled for our speaking the same things (**Ephesians 4**). In light of this, surely we will reflect His desires as we aggressively stand for truth and righteousness.

Satan is aggressively and zealously promoting evil. From the beginning he has sought to destroy all that is right. We are warned about Satan in the Scriptures. ***“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks***

about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

Satan often appears to be something that he is not. He appears to be a servant of righteousness, when in reality he is an evil, devilish worker. Consider what Paul had to say about him, ***“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.” (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).*** Satan not only appears in a deceptive manner, but he also has ***“ministers”*** who aid his cause. Such ministers will also lie, deceive and try to destroy as much as possible. They may be teaching a false doctrine concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage in order to trick you into a sinful, soul-damning situation.

We cannot be faithful if we are passive. Brethren, if we sit back and do nothing, Satan wins! If we say or do nothing, and souls are lost, their blood will be required at our hands (***Ezekiel 3:17-21***). If we truly understand the value of each soul, the urgency of reaching each precious one, and how aggressive Satan and his ministers are each moment of our lives, surely we understand that we must not sit idly by with our hands folded, feeling at ease. There are many terms in the Bible which speak of action on the part of Christians. One passage that is very applicable here is ***“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.” (1 Corinthians 16:13).***

Faithful Christians are soldiers in the Lord’s army. Paul detailed this war in ***Ephesians***: ***“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:11-17).***

We are in a constant, never-ending war against Satan and his ministers. We must fight aggressively. This war is not a matter of physical life or death, but of spiritual death. The eternal destiny of our soul is at stake! In this war there is no room for cowards or timid warriors. We cannot compromise with the enemy. Christians must be aggressive if we are to win the most important battle of our lives.

What constitutes the grounds for remarriage? Certainly, if one's spouse dies, that one may remarry, if he or she so chooses, with the approval of God. God has also given one exception to His marriage law. If a spouse abandons his or her marriage vows and has committed fornication, he or she may be put away by the other spouse. The innocent party may then choose to remarry and have God's blessings. But we must remember, that in either case, when one remarries, it must be to one that is free to marry.

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