



Seek The Old Paths

“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths. . . and walk therein”
(Jeremiah 6:16)

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FORNICATION MUST BE THE CAUSE

Victor M. Eskew

It is not the fault of the faithful who proclaim God’s will to man. Truth is the truth. When it confronts an individual, he must do whatever is necessary to conform to God’s will for his/her life.

Marriage was the first institution established by God. When God saw man’s aloneness in the Garden of Eden, He said that it was not good (Gen. 2:18). Therefore, God created a woman from Adam’s rib and brought her to him as a mate. Regarding this new and holy union, God spoke these words: *“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh”* (Gen. 2:24). The word “cleave” in this verse is a very important word. It means “to be joined together as with glue.” The application is that God wants two individuals to stay joined together in the holy bonds of wedlock until death parts them. It is then (at death) the marriage ceases to exist (See Rom. 7:2-3).

Men, including the Jews, have always refused to adhere to the binding nature of marriage (Matt. 19:7-8). Divorce is common in many cultures. In our society, little is said about divorce and remarriage. Statistically, one in two marriages end in divorce. Some have been involved in multiple marriages and divorces. These individuals divorce and remarry for almost any and every reason. Dear readers, there is hardly a family that exists that has not had to suffer through the hardships associated with a husband and wife going through a divorce. Children have

seen their parents go through it. Parents have seen their adult children go through it. Most have had one or two friends who have struggled through a divorce.

Sadly, individuals fail to research God’s will about this divine union. (NOTE: Some do not even realize that marriage is from God and that He has legislated concerning it). Because they have not learned God’s will on the subject, many violate God’s laws that have been given to regulate marriage and divorce. Remember, marriage is supposed to be a lifelong commitment. Marriage has often been defined as “one man with one woman for life.” Divorce was not part of God’s plan. The Bible teaches that God hates “putting away” (Malachi 2:16).

As we study the Bible, we learn that the Lord allowed “only one cause” for divorce and remarriage. That cause is “fornication.” Let’s listen to Jesus’ teaching on this subject. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: *“It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of **fornication**, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery”* (Matt. 5:31-32). The words, “saving for the cause of fornication,” are important

for our study. Jesus taught that fornication **MUST** be THE CAUSE of the divorce if a person is going to be free to remarry. The word “cause” means “the reason or motive for some action.” Here, the reason a person obtains a divorce is because his/her mate has committed fornication.

Jesus echoes this teaching again in Matthew 19:9. *“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.”* Jesus tells us that “fornication” is the only exception that allows one to divorce and remarry. For emphasis, let’s leave the phrase, “except it be for fornication,” out of the verse. When we do, we see God’s original design. “Whosoever shall put away his wife, and shall marry another committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.” In fact, this is exactly what Luke 16:18 says! If a person divorces and remarries, he/she enters into an adulterous marriage relationship. Both individuals in that relationship are committing adultery (living in, Col. 3:5-7). **Jesus gives one exception, “except it be for fornication.”** If a person’s mate has

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Fornication...



Editorial...

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE KINGDOM / CHURCH #1

Garland M. Robinson

The “stone” Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream of a great image broke the image into pieces (Daniel 2:31-45). The stone grew and became a great mountain. It was a prophecy of the church that would be built by Jesus in the first century (Matt. 16:18). Instead of it being a worldly kingdom, it would be a spiritual kingdom and would fill the whole earth.

The kingdom / church is a SPIRITUAL KINGDOM.

Jesus said to Pilate: “*my kingdom is not of this world*” (John 18:36). Jesus also said, “*The kingdom of God cometh not with observation*” (Luke 17:20). At Athens in Greece Paul preached, “*God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands*” (Act 17:24). The writer of Hebrews tells us that the kingdom is made up of “the spirits” of just men, not their bodies. “*To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect*” (Heb. 12:23). Peter refers to the kingdom/church as a “*spiritual house*” (1 Peter 2:4-5,9).

The kingdom / church is UNIVERSAL.

It reaches around the world and its Gospel is preached in every land. It began in Jerusalem and spread throughout Judea, then Samaria and around the world. Paul wrote to those in Colosse: “*If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister*” (Col. 1:23). Isaiah prophesied that “*all nations shall flow into it*” (Isa. 2:2) and that is exactly what it did and continues to do. The Lord’s eternal kingdom is not limited to one place or nation.

The kingdom / church has only ONE HEAD.

Its head is Jesus the Christ, the only begotten Son of God. Paul declared: God the Father “*hath put all things under his feet [Jesus], and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all*” (Eph. 1:22-23). To the brethren at Colosse he wrote: “*And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence*” (Col. 1:18).

The kingdom / church is ONE BODY, not many.

“*There is one body*” (Eph. 4:4). The body is the church. “*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit*” (1 Cor. 12:13). “*For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another*” (Rom. 12:4-5). “*For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread*” (1 Cor. 10:17). “*Now are they many members, yet but one body*” (1 Cor. 12:20).

The kingdom / church has only ONE MEDIATOR.

“*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*” (1 Tim. 2:5). This eliminates any and all others. Many have claimed that status, and all have failed: all the popes of Rome, Mary Baker Eddy, Mother Teresa, Joseph Smith, Herbert W. Armstrong, etc. There is no other way to heaven than through Christ. “*Jesus saith...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*” (John 14:6).

The kingdom / church has only ONE SAVIOR.

It is Christ Jesus the Lord. “*Which*

in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15). Jesus is the savior of the body, the church (Eph. 5:23). He purchased the church with his blood shed on calvary (Acts 20:28). Those who repent and are baptized are added to it by the Lord himself (Acts 2:38,41,47). It is the body of all the saved. The redeemed (saved) exist nowhere else.

The kingdom / church has only ONE LAW.

Jesus made it clear, “*He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day*” (John 12:48). Peter proclaimed, “*According as his [Jesus] divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue*” (2 Peter 1:3). All things that pertain to everlasting life is found in the New Testament. All other books, manuals, creeds, documents, etc. will perish along with those who follow them: the book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of great Price, Science and health and key to the Scriptures, etc. etc. all lead men to destruction.

The kingdom / church is the CALLED-OUT BODY.

Sinners are called out of the world and translated into the church of Christ when they Hear, Believe, Repent, Confess and are Baptized into water for the forgiveness of their sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:37, Acts 22:16). “*Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son*” (Col. 1:13). The saved constitute a “*...chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy*” (1 Peter 2:9-10).

The kingdom / church is the BRIDE OF CHRIST.

“*For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ*” (2 Cor. 11:2). “*And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is*

athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17). The bride is the church and the Lamb’s wife (Rev. 21:9).

The kingdom / church was purchased with the BLOOD of Christ.

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it”* (Eph. 5:25). Its members have been purchased by the Lord’s blood and added to the church (Acts 2:47; Eph. 1:7; 2:13).

The kingdom / church was/is the ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD.

“To the intent that now unto the

principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:10-11). What God had in store in the Old Testament (his kingdom, his church) was revealed in the New Testament. It had been kept secret through the ages, but was revealed to the apostles (cf. Eph. 3:2-7; 1 Cor. 2:6-9; 1 Peter 1:9-12; Rom. 16:25; Col. 1:26-27).

The kingdom / church has OVERSEERS (shepherds, pastors, bishops, elders).

The qualifications of these men are made clear in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Their work is to see to it that what the congregation does is done according to God’s authority (a *“thus saith the Lord”*). They uphold the truth and will not allow anything

to be taught or done that is not right with God. They superintend the local flock/church of which they are members.

The kingdom of God, the church of Christ, is NOT OUT OF DATE.

The Lord instituted it and is its head (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18). It will continue until he comes again. *“Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power”* (1 Cor. 11:24-26). Salvation is in Christ and to be in Christ is to be in his church (Col. 1:2; 3:15; Acts 2:38,41,47). In him is *“no condemnation”* (Rom. 8:1). Salvation is in him (2 Tim. 2:10) where *“all spiritual blessings”* are found (Eph. 1:3).

GOD’S GREAT GOSPEL

Roger Campbell

In the epistle which was addressed to *“the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse”* (Col. 1:2), Paul commended them for their faith and love (1:4). He then spoke about their hope (1:5). What is not to like about the combination of faith, love, and hope?!

How did they have hope? Through the Gospel. Here is what the apostle went on to write: *“For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth”* (Col. 1:5-6). What did he show them (and us) about God’s great Gospel?

The Gospel is a message of TRUTH. Again, Paul described it as *“the word of the truth of the gospel”* (Col. 1:5). Jesus said the Father’s word is truth (John 17:17). When we read, follow, and spread the Gospel of God, we have the assurance that it is truth.

The Gospel is a message of HOPE. How did people in the city of Colosse hear about hope? Through the Gospel (Col. 1:5). And, that hope pointed to what location? To heaven: *“the hope which is laid up for you in heaven”* (Col. 1:5). A bit later in this

same letter, Paul spoke of *“the hope of the Gospel”* (Col. 1:23). Christians have a singular hope (Eph. 4:4), which is eternal life (Titus 1:2). Only God’s Gospel of truth gives legitimate hope to humans! Any philosophy or teaching that is founded on human ideas of any sort cannot give real hope. In particular, we need to beware of teaching which is a mixture of God’s truth and human ideas. Having genuine hope is possible only through the God of hope (Rom. 15:13) and the Gospel of His dear Son.

God’s great Gospel is for all people EVERYWHERE. Paul wrote about the Gospel coming/going into all the world (Col. 1:6). Such language reminds us of the Great Commission — the charge of Jesus to preach the Gospel to every creature in all the world (Mark 16:15). As the old song says, *“The gospel is for all.”* There is no such thing as one Gospel for the Gentiles and a different one for the Jews. There is one Gospel, period. God’s wisdom and power make the Gospel “fit” the needs of every person of every race in every place.

The Gospel bears FRUIT. Paul declared that the Gospel which came to Colosse *“bringeth forth fruit”* (Col. 1:6). When the incorruptible seed is sown and people receive it, they are

born again (1 Peter 1:22-23). Jesus spoke of sowing and reaping or sowing and a harvest (John 4:35-37). One “fruit” which the Gospel produces is “saved people.” A second type of fruit it produces is the spiritual development/maturity of Christians. In fact, we read about this kind of fruit right here in Colossians 1, as Paul said he prayed for them to be *“fruitful in every good work”* (Col. 1:10), which would be the same as them *“being filled with the fruits of righteousness”* (Phil. 1:11). The Gospel produces God-glorifying fruit.

The Gospel is a message of GRACE. When the folks in Colosse heard the Gospel, they *“knew the grace of God in truth”* (Col. 1:6). In Bible lingo, it is *“the gospel of the grace of God”* (Acts 20:24). God’s kindness is revealed through the Gospel, which shows humanity how to act in order to receive (and keep on receiving) God’s grace.

The Gospel must be COMMUNICATED. How did people living in Colosse get connected with the Gospel? Paul said, *“...the truth of the gospel, which has come to you”* (Col. 1:5-6, NKJV). So, we are looking at a historical fact: the Gospel came to Colosse. The Gospel getting to Colosse was the effect; what was the cause? God’s

Gospel did not get there by accident. It did not just fall out of the sky. No, the Gospel was carried to the residents of that area by human messengers, one of whom is noted in verse seven, a brother by the name of Epaphras. Brethren, if we want lost folks to hear the Gospel, it is our responsibility to

get it to them. Let us put forth a renewed effort to communicate the only message that can save the souls of men.

I love the simplicity of Acts 14:7. The whole verse consists of only a few words, but they give us a plain and powerful picture of what Barnabas

and Paul did in one geographic region: *“And there they preached the gospel.”* Thank God for His great Gospel, which still has the power to deliver souls from sin and prepare those who continue to follow it for heaven.

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committed fornication, then that individual can divorce and remarry without committing adultery.

When some individuals hear this teaching, they are “taken back.” They cannot believe their ears. Interestingly, the apostles reacted this way when they heard it. Here is how they responded. *“His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry”* (Matt. 19:10). Their reaction, however, did not change the teaching. The teaching is God’s divine standard for divorce and remarriage. Fornication is the “one thing” that is severe enough to allow the marriage bond to be dissolved and allow the offended spouse to remarry without committing adultery. Here, a vital point needs to be made. When fornication is committed in a marriage, the offended mate is not commanded to divorce. There are some who work through the sin and remain married. The sin of fornication, however, does provide the offended party with the option to divorce and remarry. The person can do so without being involved in adultery in the next marriage (if the one they marry also has a right to marry).

It is important for individuals to understand that fornication **MUST BE THE CAUSE** of the divorce. When asked: “Why did you divorce your mate?” The person needs to be able to respond: “I divorced my mate because he/she committed fornication, and I could no longer remain in the marriage.” In that reply, fornication is “the reason or motive” for the action of divorce. If it is not the cause for the divorce, the person who is divorced is not free to remarry. If he/she does, he/she commits adultery. Too, the person to whom the individual is married commits adultery.

Let’s consider two final points be-

fore closing this article. First, very few states will allow fornication/adultery to be put on the divorce papers as “the cause” of the divorce. The words that are most often used now are “irreconcilable differences.” This point does not mean that an offended party cannot obtain a divorce. Fornication is an irreconcilable difference. In truth, it is the only irreconcilable difference allowed by the Word of God for a divorce and that frees one to remarry.

Second, there are some people who attempt to find “loopholes” in God’s law. A loophole is a means whereby one can evade the law of God. Here is how the loophole often plays out. Two individuals who are married, divorce for a cause other than fornication. The list of reasons people divorce is very lengthy: 1) They fall out of love. 2) Family finances caused them to fight and argue. 3) They were too immature to be married; etc. etc. What is important is that they **DID NOT** divorce for the cause of fornication. The day after the divorce was final, they would have been honest and given the real reason for the divorce. Later, one of these individuals learns God’s will about divorce and remarriage. Since, he/she did not divorce for the cause of fornication, he is not free to remarry without committing sin. Some try to find a loophole by stating that their ex has either committed fornication or has gotten married after they were divorced. They want this “after the divorce” act to be the cause of their divorce. But, **IT WAS NOT**. They divorced for a cause other than fornication.

God never intended for divorce and remarriage to be played as a “waiting game.” Can anyone image this scenario being right? John divorces Jane because he does not love her. Every year he calls her and asks: “Have you remarried?” For the first six years, she tells him: “No.” On year seven, he calls again and asks the

same question. This time, she tells him she has remarried. Now, John says: “Great. I am now free to remarry because you have committed adultery against me.” But, his divorce seven years ago was not for the cause of fornication. Dear readers, this is not the game that God intended anyone to play with His law. Fornication must be the cause of the divorce.

This writer realizes that this teaching is a difficult teaching. Back in the 1960s and 1970s, our society began to abandon God’s teaching about marriage, divorce, and remarriage on a large scale. People married, divorced, and remarried, without any thought of God in the process at all. Too, our society began to abandon the importance of having a relationship with God. This caused people to engage in the practice of adultery without any thought given to the sins being committed. When they finally learn about the consequences of their actions in light of God’s truth, they find themselves in a valley of extremely difficult decisions. This, however, is not God’s fault. He has revealed His truth to mankind. It is not the fault of the faithful who proclaim God’s will to man. Truth is the truth. When it confronts an individual, he must do whatever is necessary to conform to God’s will for his/her life. Paul clearly teaches us: *“Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ...”* (Phil. 1:27).

In the realm of marriage, there are some people who will have to remain single for the rest of their lives to please God. Jesus affirmed this in Matthew 19:12. *“...And there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.”*

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IS THE LORD'S CHURCH DYING? #2

Rod Rutherford

Not only are churches of Christ feeling the onslaught of secularization resulting in declining membership, but almost all the denominations have experienced the same decline.

In the previous article (Oct/24) we pointed out that even though churches of Christ are no longer the fastest growing religious body in the United States, the indications are that worldwide we are growing rapidly. There are at least three times as many members of the Lord's church today outside the United States as there are within its borders. This means the United States has 25% of the members of the church while the other 75% are scattered among the rest of the nations and territories of the world. In this article we shall look at the question: **“Why are churches of Christ in the United States no longer growing and appear to be declining in numbers of congregations and also of members?”**

A major factor in the declining number of congregations in the United States is due to a change in demographics. For more than one hundred years there has been a movement away from small towns and farms to the larger cities. Many rural churches began meeting in the country schools that were commonly built about four miles apart so that no pupil would have to walk more than two miles to get to school. When schools were consolidated, many of these congregations continued to meet separately rather than merge. There is no longer a need for churches to be in walking distance. People generally think nothing of driving ten, twenty, or thirty miles to work. Many are also willing to drive five, ten, fifteen or twenty miles to worship in a larger church in the city because they feel the larger church has more to offer them and their children. As a result, the smaller rural churches are losing members, especially younger families. Many of these churches are simply closing their doors because they have outlived their usefulness.

Population shifts within a city also account for the decline of some churches. Once flourishing residential areas have become industrial areas.

Once peaceful neighborhoods can change and gradually become high crime areas. Many workers in the city like to get away from the hustle and bustle of city life at the end of the day. Therefore, they move to the outer suburbs. Churches which do not follow the exodus of their members may lose those members. I know of a once flourishing church in a large Southern city. The area around it gradually changed and declined. Crime increased. Many members moved away, but the church remained in its original location. Eventually it closed its doors. A nearby church, which was planted by the previous church, saw the decline as members moved to outer suburbs. They wisely followed their members and today are a flourishing congregation doing a good work.

Another major reason for the decline in the number of congregations and the number of members is the increasing secularization of America. Since the Second World War, Western nations, particularly those in Europe, have become very secular. In England, Islamic mosques, community centers, gyms, and even taverns are now meeting in what were once church facilities. Membership in churches in the nations of Europe are declining rapidly. In Germany more than 500 Roman Catholic churches have closed since the year 2000. A poll in France revealed that 50% of the people do not even believe in a Supreme Being. A 2015 study in the Netherlands revealed that 63% of the Dutch people believe religion does more harm than good. Since 2000, 20% of all churches in Canada have closed. Only 53% of Canadians now identify as “Christians.”

Sadly, the United States is following the example of these countries in Western Europe and our neighbor to the north. The 1950s saw a religious revival in America with a great majority identifying as Christians and record membership and attendance in nearly all the congregations of most

denominations. However, by the mid-1960s the revival had run its course and secularization began a rapid advance. In addition to growing secularization, “spirituality” among the “unchurched” is on the rise. A growing number of people do not claim to be “Christian” or adhere to any particular religion, but say they are “spiritual” in some vague, nebulous sense. A poll in the U.S. in 2020 revealed that only 64% of the American people identified even loosely as “Christians,” but 30% identified as “nones.” “Nones” do not claim to be part of any category of religious faith. They seem to have little, if any, interest in any religion or belief in the supernatural.

Not only are churches of Christ feeling the onslaught of secularization resulting in declining membership, but almost all the denominations have experienced the same decline. Between 1976 and 2022 the Evangelical Lutheran Church lost 30% of its membership. The United Methodist Church lost 17% of its membership in the same period. The Presbyterian Church USA lost 40% of its members during this time. A survey made in 2019 revealed that the Roman Catholic Church in the U.S. lost two million members between 2000 and 2017. Among Southern Baptists, 5,771 of their congregations reported in a recent year that they had no baptisms during that year. Only Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons and Pentecostals have had increases in membership between 2003 and 2018, but these increases have been slight in comparison with past growth. Tragically, churches of Christ have not escaped the ravages of secularization!

Our next article will conclude our study, “Is the Lord's Church Dying?” We will note some additional reasons the church has lost members and congregations.

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(Documentation for facts contained in the above article is available from the writer)*

DANGERS WE FACE

Marvin L. Weir

Those who have obeyed the Gospel are admonished to continue in the pathway of righteousness. Salvation is conditional.

There are certain sins that some people will never commit. The devil realizes this but it doesn't bother him at all. Satan knows that a person can avoid many sins while practicing one sin and lose his soul. It is not the number of sins that condemns, but sin itself. This is the reason James admonishes, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). Those who have never obeyed the Gospel are lost. Paul states this truth in saying that the Lord will render "vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thess. 1:8-9). A failure to obey the Gospel will condemn one to an eternal hell. The Bible declares that salvation is **in Christ Jesus** (2 Tim. 2:10). The Scriptures also state, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). To have access to the blood of Christ and forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7), one must be **IN** Christ.

Those who have obeyed the Gospel are admonished to continue in the pathway of righteousness. Salvation is conditional. John affirms such by saying, "if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). What if children of God choose to walk in darkness instead of the light of God's word? The Bible teaches that unless they repent and forsake their error they will be lost forever (cf. Acts 8:13-22).

Many Christians will never steal, kill, curse or commit adultery. They have high moral standards and try to be good citizens in their community. What are some dangers they may face as they seek to live a life pleasing unto God?

The danger of being a spectator of persons. Within the body of Christ it matters not whether one is rich or poor, educated or uneducated,

black or white or male or female. The Bible teaches that it is a sin to show partiality among God's people. James says, "but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors" (James 2:9). If the devil can convince a child of God that he has the **right** to show partiality, then he has won a victory.

It is proper for people to have their "inner circle" of friends. We have more in common with some folks than we do with others. Such is not sinful. It is wrong however, to avoid or refuse to speak to a brother or sister in Christ. Some who profess to be children of God will not sit near nor shake hands with a particular person or family. The cause is not a scriptural matter of fellowship but simply a show of partiality. A faithful child of God must always choose to serve and act in a manner that does not show partiality to other members of the kingdom!

The apostle Paul sums up this matter well in saying, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye [be] Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:28-29).

The danger of not using our abilities in serving in the kingdom. Many Christians use their educational training and intelligence in a remarkable way in the secular realm. They are involved and dedicated to their profession. They work long hours and stay up late at night so they will be considered successful in their endeavors.

Many times the Lord's church would close its doors if it had to depend upon these same folks to work in the kingdom. There are visits to be made and Bible classes for both men and women to teach. Men are needed to serve in the assembly each Lord's Day.

Satan knows he has won a victory when he can convince folks the church needs to serve them but they do not need to serve the church!

The danger of not seeking the

kingdom first. In the Sermon on the Mount the Lord stated, "But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). Guy N. Woods comments on this verse as follows:

This familiar affirmation of our Lord establishes, beyond doubt, his determination to have first place in the hearts and lives of those who would be his followers. Set out in it is (1) an *obligation*: "But seek ye" (2) the *object* to be sought is: "his kingdom, and his righteousness." (3) the *order* characterizing such seeking is to be, "first." And, attached is a *conditional promise*: If we seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, "all these things" (the material needs of life), "shall be added" (literally, thrown in extra).

It is thus clear that the Lord is satisfied with nothing less than top priority in our hearts and lives. To put him first means simply that if we have two places to go — one, involving our own interests, the other, his — we must make the Lord's trip first. If we have two tasks to perform — one the Lord's, the other, our own — we must take care of the Lord's task first. [Normal activities; not emergencies, MLW].

The danger of not giving as we have been prospered. God said to His people of old, "Will a man rob God? yet ye rob me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with the curse; for ye rob me, even this whole nation" (Malachi 3:8). While living affluently in America many Christians rob God every week. They simply earn **too much** to give as they have been prospered (1 Cor. 16:2; cf. 2 Cor. 9:7).

May we remember the danger of any sin!

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IS THE SABBATH TO BE OBSERVED TODAY?

Jon Gary Williams

THE MEANING OF THE WORD "SABBATH"

The most literal definition of the word sabbath is "to cease" or "to cease from labor." In biblical context the word is associated with "rest" (Exodus 20:11; 31:17), and it is identified as the "seventh day" of the week (Exodus 16:26).

WHEN WAS THE KEEPING OF THE SABBATH ESTABLISHED?

Genesis 2:3 is used by Sabbatarian (those who keep the sabbath observance) to show that the sabbath was kept from the beginning of creation. However, this is a misuse of the text.

Genesis 2:3 is a figure of speech called *prolepsis* wherein an event is spoken of as having occurred before it actually did. This is because the recording of the event was done after the event occurred. (For example: A historian may write: "Columbus discovered America." This is not to imply that the new world was already called "America" when it was discovered; simply that when the historian made the statement, it was known as "America.")

Other prolepsis examples are: Genesis 12:8 as compared with Genesis 28:19; and Matthew 10:4 as compared with Matthew 26:47-49. The sabbath was given at Mt. Sinai after the Israelites "came forth" from Egypt (Deut. 4:44-45; 5:1). But the sabbath was not "made known" to the Israelites until Mt. Sinai (Neh. 9:13-14).

FOR WHOM WAS THE SABBATH INTENDED?

The sabbath was not a universal requirement. It was declared specifically to the Israelites who were present with Moses (Deut. 4:13), and was not made known to their ancestors (Deut. 5:1-3).

WHY WAS THE SABBATH GIVEN?

The sabbath was given as a "sign" between God and Israel (Exodus 31:13,17). It was to be used as a memorial to remind the Israelites of

being freed from Egypt (Deut. 5:15).

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE SABBATH?

The law of Moses, of which the sabbath was a part, was taken away by the death of Christ (Col. 2:14). The law of Moses, of which the sabbath was a part, was taken away for another law (will) to be established (Heb. 10:9). The law of Moses, of which the sabbath was a part, was fulfilled and, hence, that law was completed (Matt. 5:17).

Is sabbath keeping a "moral" obligation? There is nothing "moral" about any day, even the sabbath. This is only an idea invented by man. The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath (Mark 2:27). Christians are not to "keep" any day. Christians are not to be judged by keeping the sabbath (Col. 2:16-17).

THE "FIRST DAY" OF THE WEEK

Sabbatarians claim that the Catholic Church changed the sabbath to Sunday. This is a falsity and demonstrates the weakness of this doctrine. Church history clearly shows that Christians were worshiping on the first day of the week (Sunday) long before the Catholic Church existed.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE "FIRST DAY" OF THE WEEK

1. Jesus arose from the dead on the first day of the week (Mark 16:9).
2. The Holy Spirit came on the first day of the week (on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ) (Acts 2:1-4).
3. The church was established on the first day of the week (Acts 2:1,41).
4. The church assembled on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:2).
5. The church partook of the Lord's supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).

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DO YOU HAVE A LOVE OF THE TRUTH AND A PASSION TO KNOW IT?

We should be like the Psalmist: Psalm 119

- v.97 "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day."
- v.103 "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"
- v.113 "I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love."
- v.163 "I hate and abhor lying: but thy law do I love."
- v.11 "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

"Love the truth and peace" (Zech. 8:19).



SEEK THE OLD PATHS

“Grace Sturgell has passed away” ...**Columbiaville, MI**. “Please increase the number of papers you send. Thank you!” ...**Montrose C/C, Carthage, TN**. “I love getting *Seek The Old Paths*. I have for years. I especially love those on topics such as morality, obeying the law, and topics today such as divorce and remarriage (Rom. 7:1-4; 1 Cor. 7:39). It might be good to contrast the two political parties since it’s critical. Enclosed is \$\$ for your good work” ...**A Christian from Texas**. “Thank you for all your work in the kingdom. Keep up the good work” ...**Jennifer Nelson, Cookeville, TN**. “An acquaintance of mine gave me a copy of STOP. I enjoyed it very much. Would you please add me to your mailing list? Thank you and may God bless you” ...**Barbara Murray, Eufaula, OK**. “Interested in receiving this publication for free. Thank you” ...**William Pettus, Franklin, TN**. “Thank you” ...**Ryan Wigginton, Collierville, TN**. “Please send STOP to a friend in need of guidance” ...**Anonymous**. “Please begin mailing me *Seek The Old Paths*. Thank you” ...**Milton Threet, Smyrna, TN**. “Thank you for spreading the truth” ...**Pat & Norma Robinson, Lyndon, KS**. “Thank you for your excellent defense of the true Gospel” ...**Brant & Charity, Lindsay, OK**. “Just a note of thanks for the great work you are doing and faithfully upholding the word of Truth. May God continue to bless your efforts to reach and teach God’s precious word” ...**Ruth & Eldon Davis, Tuxford, SK, Canada**. “I would like to receive *Seek The Old Paths* and any other literature you may have” ...**Janet Cook, Athens, LA**. “We would like 30 copies for the congregation” ...**Jack McNeil, Jr., Kempner C/C, Kempner, TX**. “Praying for you all. Keep up the good work” ...**Don Rich, Marion, OH**. “The late brother Neil Myers said that your paper, *Seek The Old Paths*, is a sound one. Please add me to your mailing list” ...**Roy Moss, Pottersville, MO**. “Please add my friend to your mailing list. May God continue to bless you in this work. Thank you” ...**Patty Hale, Spencer, IN**. “Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Please add these members of the Camp F congregation of the church of Christ to your mailing list. Thank you and may God forever bless you and the Leoni church of Christ as you continue to do the good work of the Gospel” ...**Kenny W. Young, Jr. Angola, LA**. “With tears in my eyes I think about parents who do not prepare their children for the worship, respect, honor, and glory that pleases the Lord. They do not prepare them by seeing that the children go the restroom and water fountain before worship assemblies and they are running to these places during all of the assemblies. I wonder how long those parents expect those children to be faithful to God after they leave home? They haven’t taught them to respect God’s worship when they had opportunity. Some parents who live a long distance away are in time to send their children to the restroom before the assembling. To God be the glory” ...**Joe Turbeville, Dresden, TN**. “Look forward to receiving your publication” ...**Jack Stewart, Bakersfield, CA**. “I would like to receive *Seek The Old Paths* free” ...**Keith Brewer, Jasper, TN**. [STOP is always FREE]. “Please discontinue your newsletter to Douglas Medders. He is deceased. He always enjoyed your paper when he was able to read” ...**Tal-ladega, AL**. “Thank you for what you do” ...**Denny Wilson, Odessa, TX**. “I would like to receive *Seek The Old Paths*” ...**David Enoch, Lebanon, TN**. “Please send more copies of the Oct/24 issue. Thank you kindly” ...**Maurice Brown,**

Rockford, IL. “I perused your latest issue of STOP. Apparently you’re essentially a single/solitary issue kind of guy. Guess we all now know who you’ll cast a ballot for” ...**Rick Crawford**. [NOTE: When there are only two candidates to choose from, one issue is enough. Should we support those who say Jesus has no place with them? —gmr]. “I would like to receive *Seek The Old Paths* publication. I just read one for the first time and I really enjoyed it. I’ve been a Christian for a little over five years now and I started preaching last year around this time. Thank you for the work that you all” ...**Charles Warren, Little Rock, MS**. “Marvin Crawford has passed away” ...**Decatur, TX**. “I respectfully submit that you would remove us from your mailing list. Thank you” ...**Tim & Leslie Flynn, Tecumseh, OK**. “So much is happening in the world and the church of our Lord that it’s mind boggling. Many are sitting with closed lip, trying to ride out the storm (letting go of trying to convert the world); and, just let God handle it. Someone will have to draw the line in the sand as Moses and Elijah did. We’ll have to take a stand and perhaps run for our lives. We must rebuke family and friends and be scorned. We certainly cannot afford the wrath of God if we do nothing! Giving all diligence, let us contend for the faith and stand fast for that which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3)” ...**Name withheld by request**. “Thank you for sending *Seek The Old Paths*. It is a breathe of fresh air. Keep up the good work” ...**D. L., Lexington, TN**.

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