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## WHY IS FORNICATION THE EXCEPTION?

By Kerry Duke

God's regulations on divorce and remarriage are specific. Fornication is the sole reason for divorce and remarriage, and remarriages following divorces for other reasons are adulterous (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). The phrase "except it be for fornication" has inclusive and exclusive force. It includes as authorized remarriages those which occur following a divorce for fornication; it excludes remarriage following a divorce for other reasons. Fornication is the one cause in this dispensation for scriptural divorce and remarriage. It is distinct from all other reasons for divorce so that God allows the dissolution of a marriage which He initially sanctified. In the sight of men, drunkenness, violence, desertion, and unhappiness may seem to be sufficient grounds for divorce and remarriage, but in the eyes of God only the sin of fornication is an acceptable ground. This sin is so contrary and disruptive to the marriage relationship that God permits the innocent party to divorce the mate guilty of fornication and marry another. What is it about this sin that separates it from all other reasons for divorce? Why is fornication the single scriptural reason for divorce and remarriage?

Fornication is a violation of the one-flesh covenant of marriage. In marriage the two are joined together by God and become one flesh (Matt. 19:5-6). Marriage is a relationship which is confined to this life (Matt. 22:30), involving the desires of the physical body and the resultant sexual union. It is a covenant (Mal. 2:14) in which the two promise to keep themselves to each other. The adulterous woman forsakes "the covenant of her God" (Prov. 2:17). Fornication contradicts the sexual aspect of the marriage covenant. It strikes at this fundamental part of marriage in a way

that other marital difficulties do not.

Fornication also destroys the uniqueness of the sexual relationship in marriage. A husband and wife share many experiences and feelings with each other which they also share with others. They work, talk, and laugh with others as well as with each other. But the sexual union and the intimacies connected with it are shared only by the husband and wife. This area of marriage is the private possession of the two. It is the one thing they share in common with no one else. The sexual relationship in marriage provides a special bond, and it is interesting that the Bible uses the word "know" to refer to this union (Gen. 4:1; Matt. 1:25). The husband and wife in the sexual union know each other in a unique way. When the sexual union occurs outside the marriage, the uniqueness of the relationship is destroyed.

Since the sexual aspect of the marriage covenant is both binding and unique, it is apparent that fornication undermines the trust that is so important in the relationship. Trust is vital in securing peace in the marriage. The sin of fornication causes this trust to be replaced by suspicion, fear, and insecurity which may eat at the bond which once held the two together until nothing is left. One earns the trust of another by his life and character, and the married fornicator shows himself to be untrustworthy by his deeds. The adulterer usually lies to his mate to cover his sin. But he soon finds that he must tell other lies to cover the previous ones. It is not the physical act of fornication by itself that is so destructive to the marriage, but the dishonesty and disloyalty from which it proceeds. The adulterer destroys in a few moments the trust which took years to build. The offended mate

will, in time, recover from the hurt caused by this sin, but trust in the guilty party may never be restored. As a result, God does not require the innocent party to continue to live with such a mate.

Fornication also removes respect from the marriage. The Scriptures enjoin mutual respect in marriage (I Peter 3:1-7; Eph. 5:22-23), and lasting intimacy must be built upon respect. Even worldly men do not respect a woman who is "easy". Respect is a fundamental aspect of marriage in that it sets the stage for how the couple perceive and treat each other. The fornicator loses respect in the eyes of men: his honor will be given to others (Prov. 5:10). He loses respect from God (Heb. 13:4). In fact, he shows that he has no respect for himself. But in particular, he loses respect from the mate he has offended and finds disgust in its place.

Fornication is particularly vile in that it defeats a divine purpose of marriage. Paul wrote, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" (I Cor. 7:1b-2). The American Standard Version in verse two has because of fornications. Marriage is the relationship in which physical desires can be expressed and fulfilled (I Cor. 7:3-5). A Scriptural marriage is the only divinely authorized situation in which sexual union may occur. God permits one to have a mate in order to prevent fornication, but the married fornicator despises this plan by committing the very sin which the institution of marriage is designed to restrain. He rejects the purity of marriage and shows himself to be unworthy of the privilege of this divine institution.

God's attitude toward sexual immorality is indicated in several ways in Scripture. Unfaithful Israel is often portrayed as an adulterous woman (Hos. 1; Ezekiel 16). Adultery, under the law of Moses, was punishable by death (Lev. 20:10). Under the gospel of Christ, the married fornicator forfeits his right to a mate, and a lifetime of celibacy may (de-

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pending on the decision of the innocent party) be the penalty with which he has to live if he desires to please God. Since the severity of the penalty shows the heinousness of the sin, the displeasure of God toward the sin of fornication is evident. Fornication affects the marriage relationship in a way that no other violation of the marital covenant does. It so completely contradicts the very nature of marriage that God allows divorce and remarriage for this reason. In a soap-opera society where adultery is glamorized, Bible teaching on this subject should be the incentive to esteem the institution of marriage with the dignity and honor it deserves.

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**"Is The Owner There?"**

by Eddy Gilpin

This morning the telephone rang earlier than usual at the office. I answered, as I normally do, "Church of Christ." The voice on the other end informed me that she was calling on behalf of a major wholesale club (which she named) and was interested in speaking with prospective members. She then said, "Is the owner there?" I thought she had probably misunderstood where she had called, so I said, "I'm sorry, this is the church of Christ." She repeated what she had said earlier (thinking we had a bad connection) and said again, "Is the owner there?" Now I have had a number of calls by salesmen, representatives of

companies and other such individuals who have asked for "the pastor," "the reverend," or some other such titled individual. These occur quite often, and one becomes quite accustomed to fielding these types of questions. But, I had never before had anyone call and ask for "the owner." I informed her that I did not think we would be interested and thanked her for her call. After I hung up, I began to think more deeply about her question, "Is the owner there?" Just who is "the owner" of the church?

In the Bible, the church of the Lord has no exclusive name. There are a few designations given for the body, all of which give glory to Deity. Such appellations as "the church of God," "the church of the Firstborn," "the churches of Christ," can be found within the pages of inspiration. Jesus revealed that the church belonged to Him. He said, "Upon this rock I will build MY church" (Mt. 16:18). What, then should I have said to the question, "Is the owner there?" Perhaps I could have borrowed the words of the angel that greeted the three women in the tomb of Jesus on that notable first day of the week, "He is not here, but is risen" (Lk. 24:6). Since Jesus is "the owner," and since He is indeed risen, such an answer would surely have conveyed the truth.

On the other hand, what if I had answered the phone with a greeting from some man-made religious group? What answer would have been appropriate then? For example, what idea would have been conveyed to the caller if I had answered by saying, "Good morning, Catholic Church?" Truly, its designation gives its owner(s) away. What if I had answered with a greeting from the Christian Church? The church of Christ is not "owned" by Christians, but such a designation as this would infer such. What if I had answered, "Baptist Church," or "Methodist Church," or "Mormon Church" or any other of the hundreds which are a part of our divided religious society? What would the implications of "the owner(s)" be? Certainly if a religious body wears a name foreign to scripture, such inferences and implications can be made.

Jesus promised, died for, and established only one church, His church (Mt. 16:18; Acts 20:28; Acts 2:47; Rom. 16:16). Its name reveals its "owner." Its

members, being called simply Christians (Acts 11:26) likewise reveals the one to whom they belong. True followers of Christ are not called by a name that glorifies some man, movement or method. As His servant, one must bear His name (Acts 4:12). The name is important. The name reveals "the owner." Do you, dear reader, bear the name of Christ only? Are you a member of His church? Should one ask for "the owner" of the religious group of which you are a member, could you truthfully say, "He is not here, but is risen?" If you are a member of the church of Christ you can. His church is the ONLY one He died for and established. All others are counterfeits, impostors and are "owned" by another.

**Will You Become A Christian?**

by Allen Webster

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16) is the greatest news this world has ever heard! All men are lost without Christ (Rom. 3:23), and without His gospel will be lost forever from God's presence (Rom. 6:23), but with it all can be saved (Romans 1:16; I Tim. 2:4)! The world's most important question is, WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED??

(1). HEAR THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. This implies understanding exactly what the Bible teaches on God's plan of salvation. Paul wrote, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Read also John 6:44-45 and Acts 18:8. Have you done this?

(2). BELIEVE THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Jesus said, "...unless ye believe that I am He, ye shall die in your sins" (Jn. 8:24). One must believe that Jesus is the Son of God (John 3:16); came and lived a perfect life (Hebrews 4:15); died for the sins of the world (II Cor. 5:21), was buried (John 19:42), arose (Acts 2:24); and now sits on the right hand of God (I Cor. 15:25).

While no one will go to heaven without believing, faith alone will not save for "faith without works is dead" (James 2:20). Real faith obeys (Heb. 5:8-9; Matt. 7:21). Have you done this?

(3). **REPENT OF SINS.** Repentance is "a change of mind that brings about a change of life." Jesus said, "I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). A person who would be a Christian must cease to live a life of sin (Acts 11:21). Have you done this?

(4). **CONFESS CHRIST AS GOD'S SON.** This does not mean to confess your sins, but to simply state your belief. The Lord taught, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32). See also Rom. 10:9-10. Have you done this?

(5). **BE IMMersed FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS.** The apostle Peter preached, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38) and later wrote, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (I Peter 3:21).

Baptism is an immersion in water (Romans 6:4) for the purpose of receiving forgiveness of sins (Mark 16:16). A person must understand this at the time of his baptism. Have you done this?

(6). **REMAIN FAITHFUL UNTIL DEATH.** The apostle of love wrote, "...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). Some folks obey the initial steps of conversion but lose their salvation because they cease to walk in the steps of the Master (I Peter 2:21-22). The latter end of a backslider is worse than if he had never heard of Christ (II Pet. 2:20-22). Are you doing this?

The great love of God astounds the mind and touches the heart. He longs to save you. Why do you wait to become a member of the church of Christ (kingdom of God)? **WILL YOU BECOME A CHRISTIAN? PLEASE??**

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If your foot slips, you may recover your balance; but if your tongue slips, you cannot recover your words.

## Let Us Follow God's Plan

by Homer A Daniel

**THE GOD OF HEAVEN** has a plan and every responsible person must follow His way in order to be with the redeemed over on the other side. Let us, then, learn God's plan that we may be able to follow it according to His will.

### No Book But The Bible

The Bible is the only common ground of union. Within the shadow of the cross, Jesus prayed for unity, that we would all be one (John 17:20-21). The apostles of Christ, in their preaching, taught oneness (1 Corinthians 1:10). The Holy Spirit pleaded for it and David praised it, "Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." Hence, David could see the goodness and pleasantness of dwelling together as one. Thus, we can see that Christ prayed for unity; the Apostles taught oneness; the Holy Spirit pleaded for it and David praised it.

In view of this teaching from God's Book, the Bible, we recognize that human creeds, Disciplines, Confessions of Faith, Prayer Books, the Book of Mormon and Catechisms build parties and sow discord, division and strife. If, as some claim, the creeds of men are "What the Bible teaches," they are useless, for certainly, we have "what the

Bible teaches" in the Bible itself. If they teach more than the Bible teaches, they teach too much; if they teach less, they teach too little; if the same, it would be the Bible itself. We read in II John 9, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath the Father and the Son." Let us come back to the Bible for it all and accept God's Word as our rule of faith and practice and our only guide from earth to Heaven. It will completely furnish us to all good works (II Timothy 3:16,17). It contains all things that pertain to life and godliness (II Peter 1:3). We have seen that creeds and disciplines of men contradict and lead to eternal destruction. They are not safe to follow. We should thank God for the perfect guide—the Bible.

### No Creed But The Christ

The word creed means, "I believe." "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God...Upon this rock I will build my Church" (Matthew 16:18). "Other foundation can no man lay than is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 3:11). Christ is our only creed. In Him all the fullness of the God-head dwells (Colossians 2:9), and we are complete in Him (Colossians 2:10). He is our King, our Ruler, our Great High Priest, our Leader and Law-Giver. Yes, He is the only creed the world needs. We should ever be thankful that Christ lives as our resurrected Lord and King.

### No Organization But His Church

Christ built no other institution (Matthew 16:18) and bought no other with His blood (Acts 20:28). He gave Himself for His church and is the head of no other (Ephesians 5:23, 25). The church is the "fullness of Him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:22-23). It is "the pillar and support of the truth" (I Timothy 3:15). It is God's will and way that the "gospel might be made known through the church" (Ephesians 3:10). Hence, we need no societies arranged by men to do the work assigned us. The church is that blood-bought, Spirit-filled and heaven-born institution in and through which we prepare our souls for eternity. Again we should be grateful that on earth we can be a member of His family (Ephesians 3:14,15). God expects to reach the poor and needy by our hands as we do this great work through His Church, which is the great channel through which God reaches out to save the lost by His simple gospel (Romans 1:16).

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### No Name But Christ's

We read in Isaiah 62:2 that this new name was prophesied by "the mouth of the Lord" and fulfilled in Acts 11:26. "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." The Apostle Peter tells us that we can be saved by no other name (Acts 4:12). We are baptized in His name (I Corinthians 1:13), and after becoming His children, Christians, we can pray in no other name (John 14:13-14), and we can glorify God in no other name (I Peter 4:16). Christ is the "bridegroom" and the Church is the "bride." We today should honor the bridegroom by wearing His name. John the Baptist was not the bridegroom but the friend of the bridegroom or best man. Human names promote division. We can be saved in none other name but Christ's.

### No Worship But That Of His New Testament

Worship is not for worldly entertainment, such is vain (Matthew 15:9). "True worshipers" must worship God, in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). In spirit, is to be sincere, from the heart. In truth, is to worship as the truth directs—according to God's Word, which authorizes five items of New Testament worship. *Singing* (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). *Reading and Teaching God's Word* (Acts 2:42). *Prayer* (Acts 2:42). *The Lord's Supper on the first day of the week* (Acts 20:7). *The contribution on the first day of the week* (I Corinthians 16:1-2). This is the only worship that our Father will accept. The early disciples continued in the Apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42). We today cannot possibly worship as they did and use mechanical instrumental music and practice other innovations of men. The New Testament tells us the only kind of instrument God wants is our hearts. "Make melody in the heart" is the teaching of Christ and the Apostles (Ephesians 5:19). This worship is simple and pure. Let us ever keep it that way and not corrupt it by the "doctrines and commandments of men." May the Lord bless us to always "speak where the Scriptures speak; be silent where the Scriptures are silent; call Bible things by Bible names and do Bible things in Bible ways."

Cling to the whole Bible, not a part of it. A man is not going to do much with a broken sword.

## THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2,3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

## GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelations 2:10).

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