

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"...Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." - Ephesians 5:23

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"HE HATES DIVORCE"

(Part Two)

by Ted J. Clarke

Last month's article noted the tremendous problems the church faces today in dealing with divorce and remarriage among non-Christians who seek to obey the gospel when they are in adulterous marriage relationships. We also discussed the increasing trend to try and justify divorce and remarriage among Christians for causes other than fornication.

It was noted that Christ, in Matthew 19:1-9, gave attention to such practices and taught: (1) all men and women are subject to God's original marriage law of one man for one woman for life - Genesis 1:27; 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6; (2) that Moses' provision for divorce was permitted by God but temporary in nature - vv. 7-8; and (3) that Christ taught the only God approved reason for a divorce, allowing a subsequent remarriage, was "fornication." This alone authorizes the innocent party to "put away" the guilty party and, if desired, later remarry another eligible person (v. 9).

When Is A Divorce Not A Divorce?

Some will contend that if a person is divorced, such a person does not have a mate and may be remarried. This position violates what the Scriptures teach. The word "divorce" (or "put away") is used in two senses in the Scriptures. It can refer to actions approved by civil authorities but not approved by God, or it can refer to actions in harmony with civil law which are also authorized by God. This is also true with words like husband, wife, or marry (cf. Mark 6:17-18; John 4:17-18; Romans 7:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11).

Notice in Matthew 19:9 that if one divorces one's mate, **not because of fornication**, and marries another, that this newly formed marriage is adulterous in God's sight. Why is this so? Because there was no fornication (sexual immorality) on the part of the mate "put away" to justify the divorce. Although the mate is said to be "put away" in one sense, in God's mind the original marriage

relationship still existed and bringing another person into that relationship was adulterous. That second "marriage" was not authorized by God and would have to be dissolved and repented of for one to be right with God in these matters.

Neither can the person who is unjustly "put away" (divorced, but not for fornication) remarry without committing adultery, since he/she is still married to the one who improperly obtained the divorce, according to God's word. Unless fornication takes place and the innocent party initiates a divorce of which God approves, the first marriage partners are still "one" in God's mind. If fornication is not an issue, neither mate has the right to divorce the other, nor to contract a new marriage.

While we must obey the laws of the land (Romans 13), civil law cannot grant us the right to divorce and/or remarry for any reason that God's word does not authorize. When there is conflict between civil law and God's law "we must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29 - ASV). Even though one may obtain a legal divorce and legally remarry according to the laws of the United States (or any other country), God does not approve of such actions "except it be for fornication" (Matthew 19:9).

May The "Guilty Party" Remarry?

In a recent lesson on the above question, David Pharr, Director of the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions in Knoxville, TN, made this forceful and concise observation:

In Matthew 19:9 Jesus teaches that there is only one exception to the law that no one, not any person, has the right to divorce and remarry another. That one exception is the person who puts away his spouse because of the spouse's fornication. This is the only person allowed to divorce and remarry another. Since this is the only person (the one who has divorced a mate because of for-

nication) allowed to remarry after a divorce, it is obvious that the guilty party is not allowed to remarry. If the guilty party is allowed to remarry, it would have to follow that the one exception Jesus named is not the one exception.¹

Since Jesus gave only one exception for divorce, permitting a possible remarriage, as fornication by one's mate, it must be the case that **this exception can apply only to the innocent party**, and never to the party guilty of committing the fornication. God, by virtue of being our Creator, has the right to say under what terms marriage, divorce and remarriage may be practiced (cf. Genesis 1 & 2; Matthew 19:4-6). When God so restricts divorce or remarriage, woe be unto those who ignore God's teaching and presume to bind or loose other areas where He has not done so!

The sin of the guilty party in committing fornication and destroying a marriage "is a crime of such magnitude against a marriage that it stands in a special class as a sin that [has done - TJC] irreparable damage to the marriage. Other failures as regards the obligations of marriage are not in the same class."²

Did Jesus Speak The Truth?

It ought to be recognized that Jesus is God in the flesh and the Creator of man (John 1:1-3, 14). As such He knows all there is to know about man (John 2:24-25). Also, Christ is the very embodiment of truth and He always spoke the truth (John 14:6; 6:63; 8:31-32; 12:48; 17:17). The Lord never deceived anyone, nor spoke with guile (1 Peter 2:21-22). Accordingly, before Jesus spoke Matthew 19:9, He knew in advance all of the potential problems that could arise in a marriage. Yet, He still gave only one reason for obtaining a divorce with the subsequent right of remarriage. That one reason was and is the sin of fornication by one's marriage partner.

When one thinks about these matters (marriage, divorce and remarriage) in the light of what Jesus said, there are at least two overwhelming observations one should make. One is the permanency

(Continued on page 2)

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Ted J. Clarke EDITOR

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and sanctity of marriage; the second is the terrible nature of the sin of fornication. Marriage is not to be contracted lightly! One must be very selective in one's choice of a lifetime mate. Take time to get to know your intended mate extremely well! You ought to know the person you want to marry well enough to know that you can tolerate all of the trials that marriage can bring, without seeking a divorce for any reason other than fornication! Remember too that fornication is a sin of such disastrous consequences that, if you commit it, you may ruin your present marriage and lose the right to ever again enjoy the married state. Such a risk is a powerful motivation to keep one's marriage pure from sexual immorality.

Anyone who has divorced for any reason other than the fornication of one's mate has violated the teaching of Christ and needs to repent. Anyone who has divorced and remarried for a reason other than the fornication of a mate is continually committing adultery as long as he/she remains in that unscriptural marriage. Adulterers and fornicators will not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21).

What Can Be Done?

First, elders, preachers and teachers of God's word must teach all that it says on these subjects without compromise (John 12:48; Acts 20:20, 27). We must emphasize the permanency of marriage, the magnitude of the sin of fornication and the consequences of unscriptural divorce and remarriage. Second, those who have unscriptural divorces should be taught

to repent and, if possible, to restore their original marriage unions (Acts 17:30-31; Matthew 19:4-6). Third, those, who have ruined their original marriages and remarried unscripturally must put away their present mates because they are in a state of continually committing adultery (Matthew 19:9; Romans 7:1-3; Galatians 5:19-21). Otherwise, such people who continue to practice adultery and fornication will be eternally lost (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

No doubt many will think that the second and third points above are too drastic to merit serious consideration. We simply ask that you consider the teaching of the Scriptures cited and follow them.

Due to the widespread practice of unscriptural divorce and remarriage, there will be many who will have to make "themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake" (Matthew 19:10-12). Some people are born unable to function sexually; others have been emasculated to render them sexually inoperative; while still others have made themselves eunuchs (and have not married, as the apostle Paul) in order to devote more of their lives in service to God. Those who have unscriptural divorces and remarriages, with no God given right to do so, must be willing to obey God's will in these matters, **even if it requires subduing sexual urges and foregoing marriage.** It may be that most people will refuse to amend their lives in such a manner "for the kingdom of heaven's sake." However, the homosexual or lesbian must quit the sins of their ways of life or be eternally lost. A thief or a murderer must accept their loss of freedom in prison and the consequent loss of marital sex.

It is sad to think of all of the problems that one must deal with in correcting an unscriptural divorce and remarriage, but the sin must be repented of, and that includes ceasing to commit the sin. One would have to make provisions to try to help the unscriptural mate survive a dissolved marriage, as well as provide for children which issued from the improper marriage. However, if heaven and eternal life mean to us what they should, we will do whatever God requires to enter in (Matthew 7:13-14; Romans 8:18). [To be continued]

ENDNOTES

¹ David Pharr, "May The Guilty Party Remarry?", in *Marriage, Divorce, And Remarriage*, ed. Jim Laws. Seventeenth Annual Spiritual Sword Lectureship (Memphis: Getwell Church of Christ, 1992), 454.

² *Ibid.*, 452.

CHRIST IS WORTHY!

by Mark Mosher

There is a song in many song books entitled "Worthy Art Thou," written by Tillet S. Teddie. This song was written with Revelation, chapter five in mind. Here John describes the Lamb of God, who is **worthy** of our praise and adoration. He is worthy of our giving 100% to him. He describes the Christ as worthy.

OF REVEALING GOD'S WORD! (REV. 5:1-5) -

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, **he hath declared him**" (Jn. 1:18; emphasis mine). The phrase "in the bosom of" has its origin in a Jewish tradition. If you were to eat dinner with someone and were asked to eat at the head of the table you were counted in high esteem because you were considered to be "in the bosom of the host." That is, you would be equal with him. Christ, who is equal with God, hath been declared by God worthy to reveal his message. Christ is worthy of this honor because: (1) He proclaimed the message of the Father to the apostles (Jn. 3:34); (2) He gave this message its power by His resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:1-4); (3) He secured its remembrance through the Holy Spirit who guided these men into all truth (Jn. 16:13; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4); (4) He commissioned inspired men to write this message down for us so that it can live in us and lead us to heaven (1 Cor. 14:37; Col. 3:16).

TO APPROACH THE THRONE! (REV. 5:6-8) -

"...And he came and took the book out of the **right hand** of him that sat on the throne..." (Rev. 5:7). The "right hand" down through the ages has often been a symbol to represent power. Christ is all powerful and almighty (Rev. 1:8). He is Lord of Lords and King of Kings (Rev. 19:16). He is deity and is thus worthy to approach the throne. "Therefore being by the **right hand** of God **exalted**..." (Acts 2:33).

TO DIE FOR OUR SINS! (REV. 5:9) -

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9). He is worthy because He is the God-Man. He was tempted in all points like as we are yet without sin (Heb. 4:15). Therefore, through His death He declared the justice of God and saved all who will obey Him (Rom. 3:24-26). Although we are not worthy of the Christ, through

His death we can receive salvation.

OF THE CHURCH! (REV. 5:10) -

Christ purchased His Church-Kingdom with His own blood (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:32). The church for which the Lord died is made up of a group of baptized believers in Christ who are described by Peter as "a holy priesthood" (I Pet. 2:5). As a holy priesthood we are "to walk worthy of the vocation wherein we were called" (Eph. 4:1). Christ is worthy of our respect, devotion, honor, and service, in the church for which He died (Eph. 3:21).

TO BE WORSHIPPED! (REV. 5:11-14) -

When we come to worship God, we have come to give of ourselves to God. We have not come just to get something out of worship, but to put something into it. Christ, then, is worthy of our time, our thoughts, and our devotion. "Praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise him, all ye people. For his merciful kindness is great toward us; and the truth of the Lord endureth forever, praise ye the Lord" (Psa. 117).

Christ is worthy of our putting Him and His body (the church) first in our lives. Let us pray that all who are Christians will learn this valuable lesson! See Matt. 6:33; Lk. 14:26-33.

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THE RAPTURE (1)

by Dennis Gullede

The theory of premillennialism was so thoroughly routed in the first half of this century by Foy E. Wallace, Jr., that the aged preacher was able to write in 1977: "The premillennialists were stalemated and premillennialism was checkmated, but a revival of millennialism is in process through adherents and advocates that have reappeared" (*The Present Truth*, page v). Indeed, in 1982 a bombshell was dropped on the brotherhood with the release of Robert Shank's book, *Until*, and subtitled, *The Coming Messiah and His Kingdom*, a 517 page premillennial treatise. Oh, how we need the likes of Wallace again to help us through the trouble this false theory continues to generate!

The premillennial furor is as much alive now as it ever was. The events of the past year have shown this to be the case, particularly in respect to Rapture theory. In this connection Guy N. Woods wrote, "As has been the case for

hundreds of years when men and events have attracted to themselves worldwide attention, the prophets of doom quickly appear and affect to see in the matters occurring the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. It is not surprising that the emergence of Saddam Hussein and his ill-fated attempt to become dictator of the Arab peoples afforded these theological sensationalists opportunity to attract attention and, very profitably to their financial status, flood the market with books, pamphlets and other publications declaring the end of the age to be imminent" (*Biblical Backgrounds of the Troubled Middle East*, page 3).

A flood of materials exist which propound the ever popular Rapture theory. Denominational bookstore shelves groan under the weight of books and videos of speculative theologians who profit nicely from all of the euphoria surrounding the Rapture theory. For many years the standard source has been the Scofield Reference Bible. In 1970, Hal Lindsey made waves with his book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, and subsequent best sellers. A few years ago Edgar Whisenant boldly published his, *88 Reasons* for the second coming of Christ in 1988. Well, 1988 has come and gone, and we are all here, so in a feeble effort to cover his mistakes and miscalculations, Whisenant wrote, *The Final Shout Rapture Report - 1989*, in which he noted, "Jesus is coming, and I would give it at least a 50% chance in 1989, if not then, an abundance of Scriptures point to 1992. However...it could be 1990 or 1991." A few months ago, many of us departed our church building on a Wednesday evening to find a brochure on our cars, entitled, *Rapture: October 28, 1992 Jesus Is Coming in the Air*, published by Mission For The Coming Days, with a branch in Little Rock. The proponents of this theory are driven, serious and earnest, but you will never find a more serious abuse of Scripture than this theory affords.

[To be continued]

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People do not miss worship services because they live too far away from the building, but because they live too far away from God. (Heb. 10:25)

Procrastination is not only the thief of time, it is the grave of opportunity.

UNREALIZED PRAYER

by Jerry Moffitt

As we read about it and see how biblical people use prayer we are tantalized. Prayer is explosive in power. It moves the unerring hand that moves the universe. And in crisis, the devout Christian knows that if you are in vertigo and don't know if you are on your head or on your feet you can stabilize things by getting on your knees. In prayer we notice that man's extremity is merely God's opportunity. Truly, Satan steals a march on us when through trial and error, one way or another, he slowly convinces us that prayer is not really all that effective. We seem to pray and nothing happens afterward. We lose interest, and so prayer loses its power in our lives. Along this line let me briefly say some scriptural and practical things.

1. First, as you begin to pray, take a few moments to arrive at a consciousness that God is present when you talk. Visualize that He is there above you listening. However you must do it, make His presence real to you; make His presence more than a thought or theory. Realize that you two are there together at that very moment, and refuse to allow one shred of doubt to remain. This is basic. Work on it and spend as much time as needed until you know He is actually there.

2. Realize that in a way, successful prayer is more than a lick and a promise; it involves effort; it involves work; it

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also definitely involves time. We read, "And it came to pass in these days, that He [Jesus] went out into the mountain to pray; and He continued **all night** in prayer to God" (Luke 6:12). And Paul pleaded, "Now I beseech you brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the spirit, that ye **strive** together with me in your prayers to God for me" (Rom. 15:30). The word **strive** is **agonizomai** in the original language. It is the word from which we get "agony." Don't be shallow and tame and relaxed about prayer. Spend time. Be fervid! Work at it heartily! If someone says, "I don't have time for all that praying," remember the sentiment of Luther: "I have so much to do, I will have to spend half the day in prayer to get it all done."

3. Yet after all this, someone will say, "It just doesn't work for me. I tried, but I couldn't do it." I would tell them, spend an hour a day in the sincere effort, and come back to me in three years and say you couldn't do it. And I would also say, take it a day at a time. One hour a day for even one year adds up to a tremendous effort. Besides, using that type of patience is how we learn to master a computer, learn a foreign language, and get a high school diploma. Your effort will add up and pay off, but only if you begin now, put forth effort, and stay patiently at it.

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YOU AND PREACHING!

*There isn't a word that a preacher can say,
No matter how lovely or true,
Nor is there a prayer that his eager lips pray
That can preach a sermon as you.
You vowed to serve Christ and men know
that you did.*

*They're watching the things that you do.
There isn't one action of yours that is hid,
Men are watching and studying you.
You say you're no preacher?*

*Yes, but you preach a powerful sermon
each day.*

*The acts of your life are the things that you
teach.*

*It isn't the things that you say.
So Christians, remember you bear His name.
Your lives are for others to view.
You are living examples, men praise you or
blame,
And measure all Christians by you.*

Ridgedale Reminder

GET THEE HENCE

by M. Floyd Bailey, Jr.

With these three words our Savior sent Satan away defeated (Matthew 4:10). With these three words our Savior unleashed the power of choice given to us all to be victorious. These three words give us a divine example of the inspired admonition to "resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

It seems that many today resist the inclination that we have the ability to resist the devil. More and more the world, and yes, even the church, is falling for the temptations and lies of the "father of lies" (John 8:44). No matter how many fail to overcome, we must never despair. We still have a "High Priest" who understands our infirmities and was "...in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

We have the power to say, "Get thee hence" to the liberalism which threatens to pervert our gospel (Galatians 1:6-7). We must say "get thee hence" to the world's humanism which threatens to demote our God (1 Corinthians 8:5-6). We can declare "get thee hence" to the materialism which infiltrates our spirituality (Matthew 6:24). This power has been given to all those who have been enlightened by God's most holy word (Psalm 119:11; Ephesians 1:17-23), to those who have been strengthened by the knowledge of God (Colossians 1:10-14), to those who are protected by the "shield of faith" (Ephesians 6:16). Let us all practice our "get thee hence" power. It is our way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Salem, VA

God's Plumb Line

It is a fact that the bee finds sweetness and the spider finds poison in the same flowers. Each finds what it is prepared to find. The lesson is obvious. If I can see nothing but the shortcomings and weaknesses of my brethren, you may be sure that is what I am looking for. On the other hand, if I take the time to know my brother, I can find much that is worthwhile and commendable. We would all be better Christians if we learned to look for the GOOD in others. We could use that discovery as the basis for helping him overcome his faults. That is the way Jesus did it.

via Ohatchee, AL

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; 1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (1 Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; 1 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; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

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