

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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"COVENANT-BREAKING," ADULTERY, AND DIVORCE

"HE HATES DIVORCE"

(Part Four)

by Ted J. Clarke

Introduction

Three previous articles discussed marriage, divorce and remarriage from the standpoints of whether or not Matthew 19:9 applies only to Christians, can the guilty party remarry, can the deserted mate remarry, and various lesser issues. From our mail, telephone calls and personal comments made, we judge that the articles have been needful, helpful, and fairly well received. For all of that we are thankful. We also appreciate comments of disagreement which have been made in a good spirit, even though we have learned nothing to cause us to change what we have written. This article will conclude this series. We have had no desire to weary our readers with a lengthy discussion of these issues, but we feel that the treatment was essential and hope that it was profitable to those who read the articles.

"Covenant-Breaking" and Adultery

This concept of "covenants" is not the same as the covenant view which says that Matthew 19:9 applies only to those in covenant relationship with God, meaning Christians. Rather, this is another view on divorce and remarriage which has been set forth in recent years and promoted by some preachers in Missouri and Arkansas, although not confined to these states. Its increasing popularity is due to the fact that it freely permits and accepts multiple divorces and remarriages.

Simply stated, this view teaches that marriage is a covenant agreement between two people which requires interaction between mates in a number of ways other than sexual relations, although it includes that. Marriage involves emotional and spiritual ties and mutual duties toward each other, as well as the sexual bond. With this much of this theory we could agree. However, the view goes on to say that one can commit

"adultery" by breaking the covenant (marriage agreement) in any number of ways besides sexual unfaithfulness. Failing to provide for a mate's needs in any of the ways listed above is supposedly "adultery" and breaks the marriage. Notice the following quotes, which, properly analyzed, show the dangerous extremes of this view.

A person who destroys the covenant of marriage through divorce, desertion, or violence commits adultery (unfaithfulness). WE CONCLUDE THAT ADULTERY IS THE BREAKING OF A COVENANT. ALSO, THE COVENANT CAN BE BROKEN IN DIFFERENT WAYS. ¹ (Emphasis is the author's.)

We must recognize, however, that divorce breaks the marriage regardless of how the divorce is obtained. THE IDEA THAT GOD DOES NOT RECOGNIZE THE DIVORCE "EXCEPT FOR FORNICATION" IS A FALLACY THAT WE MUST DISPEL BEFORE WE CAN BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE. ² (Emphasis is the author's.)

Please notice some significant points in this false view on divorce and remarriage quoted above. First, the teachers of this view believe in a variety of reasons for divorce, not just the one Jesus authorized (fornication). Second, they teach that God recognizes (accepts as valid) divorce for any cause. This is precisely the question that the Jews asked Christ in Matthew 19:3, and He responded that there was only one cause God accepted (verses 6-9). Third, by defining "adultery" as covenant-breaking, meaning to "destroy the covenant of marriage... IN DIFFERENT WAYS," the teachers of this view avoid telling anyone that they are unscripturally married and living in an adulterous relationship. In their view "adultery" is

not the sexual act of a married person with one who is not his/her spouse. They define "adultery" as the one time act of divorcing one's mate for any reason and marrying another. This means that since this sin of "adultery" happens only in the divorcing and remarrying, one can repent of that act and still remain with the spouse of the second marriage (or third, or fourth, etc.) without continuing to sin sexually. However, if it can be shown that these passages on marriage, divorce and remarriage refer to "adultery" as the sexual acts of a married person with another to whom he/she is not married in God's sight, then their continued sexual cohabitation would mean that they were living in a state of adultery. Such persons would have to repent of adultery and dissolve their unscriptural union to avoid continuing in such sin and being lost eternally (Galatians 5:19-21).

Defining "Adultery"

All of the standard works defining Greek words of the New Testament give the literal meaning of "adultery" to be sexual relations by a married person with one who is not that person's spouse. See the words "adultery" and "adulterer" in *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, or the Greek words "moichea" and "moichos" [and their various forms] in *Thayer's* or *Arndt & Gingrich's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*.

"Adultery" also has a figurative use which derives from its literal meaning. The practice of sexual unfaithfulness in marriage is figuratively applied to Israel's spiritual unfaithfulness to God in passages like Ezekiel 23:43-44. God says that Israel's adulterous relations with the pagan nations and their gods was "as they [that] go into a woman that playeth the harlot." Israel's violation of her spiritual marriage covenant with God was as serious as a woman who sexually cheated on her husband. The illustration fits because Israel was said to be married to God (Jeremiah 3:14).

"Adultery" is not simply covenant-

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breaking in some sense of violating a marriage agreement. The original meaning of adulterate was to add another element to something pure which defiled or made impure the original. Adding a third party to the original union of two defiles a marriage. It is a violation of the most serious kind, an intrusion into the purity of the sexual union of husband and wife, adulterating (adding something impure) to the original marriage. As long as one continues to participate sexually with a third party while married or bound to another in God's sight, those persons are living in an adulterous relationship. This is the case whether one is being sexually unfaithful while still trying to maintain a front of being a faithful marriage partner; whether one is unscripturally divorced and remarried; or if one is a "put away" party guilty of fornication (see Matthew 19:6-9; Romans 7:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7:10-15, and the three previous articles in this series). In Romans 7:2-3 the woman who is joined sexually to another man (whether married or not) "while her husband liveth" is "called an adulteress." How long would she be an adulteress? As long as she remained in that relationship with another man while her husband was alive!

Jesus' Use of "Adultery"

Our Lord used the word "adultery" in both the literal and figurative senses, but since the meaning of the word is primarily sexual unfaithfulness in marriage, that meaning is foremost in His usage. Matthew 5:27-28 points to the idea of illicit sexual activity as the words "looketh on a woman to lust after her" indicate.

Matthew 5:31-32; 19:9 imply the normal literal meaning of sexual immorality in that no actual divorce has taken place to justify remarriage in God's sight. Therefore, in 5:31-32 the "put away" woman and the man who marries her will be adulterous, since this would add a third person to the still existing marriage of the two. In 19:9 the man (person) who put away his mate not for fornication and remarried would be guilty of the same violation.

It is likely that Jesus used the word "adultery" in a figurative sense in a passage like Matthew 12:39 - "an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign..." He could have been speaking of the Jews' sexual immorality in a literal sense, but He was more likely to have reference to their spiritual unfaithfulness to God. But remember, even in its figurative sense, "adultery" carried the major illustration that Israel was unfaithful to God (adulterous) in the sense that one spouse was to another when he/she sought sexual gratification outside the marriage union (cf. Ezekiel 23:43-44; Jeremiah 13:27).

The Scriptures show that "adultery" (sexual unfaithfulness) is the only kind of covenant-breaking by which Jesus allowed the innocent party to terminate a marriage and remarry. "Adultery" is the specific word for sexual infidelity in marriage and is included in the word "fornication" in Matthew 19:9. "Fornication" is a term which embraces all illicit sexual activity. One might not be faithful to a marriage covenant by not being financially responsible in providing for one's mate, or in not properly fulfilling husbandly or wifely duties such as training children in the way of the Lord or being a keeper at home (Ephesians 6:4; Titus 2:4-5), but not being faithful in these areas (and others like them) **does not give one authority from God to divorce and remarry!** Jesus said that only sexual unfaithfulness so strikes at the heart of a marriage covenant that it stands as the sole cause for permitting the innocent offended party to divorce and remarry (Matthew 19:6-9).

Conclusion

First, there is no justification for saying that "adultery" can be covenant-breaking in a marriage in ways that do not entail sexual immorality (Matthew 19:9; Romans 7:2-3). Second, it cannot be shown that God accepts divorce for every reason and allows (approves of) all divorced

people to remarry and continue in that marriage, be it their second, third, etc. (Matthew 5:31-32; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11). God does not recognize (approve of) any divorce, "except it be for fornication" (Matthew 19:9). Third, to deny that "adultery" can be and is an ongoing sin as long as people are unscripturally divorced and remarried is to deny the plain and obvious teaching of the Scriptures, and will cause thousands, perhaps millions, to miss God's kingdom (Matthew 5:31-32; 19:9; Romans 7:2-3; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11; 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19-21).

False teachers, to gain seeming support for their views, have to redefine the meaning of words in the Scriptures in order to force them to teach their erroneous views. We cannot allow men to redefine "adultery" in such a way as to permit and encourage more divorces and remarriages than the Scriptures allow. The false teaching reviewed in this article is just another in a line too long which is wreaking havoc in the world and in the moral climate of the Lord's church. Friends and brethren, "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11).

It is past time for elders, preachers and faithful members to take a stand for truth in these areas and to "contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Rise up, brethren, and demand that false teaching on these issues stop and insist that "the whole counsel of God" be preached where you worship (Acts 20:27).

Endnotes

¹ John L. Edwards, *An in Depth Study of Marriage and Divorce* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Co., 1990 revised edition), 56.

² *Ibid.*, 61.

Editor's note: John Edwards' book is leading many astray. For a further and much more complete exposure of his views, obtain a copy of his debate with Don Tarbet. I believe that the Tarbet-Edwards Debate can still be purchased from *Thrust Journal*, P.O. Box 1275, Portland, TX 78374. Brother Tarbet has also published a book entitled, *Expose of Errors About Adultery* in which he details many more of the serious consequences of Edwards' doctrine. It may be that you can also purchase this through *Thrust*. We thank Brother Tarbet for his service to the brotherhood in this area.

Truth loses some battles, but never a war.

DOES GOD WINK AT IGNORANCE?

by Joel S. Wheeler

When the inspired apostle Paul "stood in the midst of Mars Hill" (Acts 17:22), he made a profound statement that would ring throughout the centuries. He said, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). Paul, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, made it known that all men will be held accountable for the sins which they commit. Included in this statement was the fact that even ignorance was no excuse and could not replace obeying the commandments of God (John 14:15).

When the apostle to the Gentiles came to Athens, "he found the city given wholly to idolatry" (Acts 17:16). Secular history or tradition tells us that during the first century A.D. there were idols on every street corner in that great city of Athens. These Athenians worshipped everything under the sun and had an idol for it. They even built an idol and devoted it to the "UNKNOWN GOD," fearing they had left one of the "gods" out of their worship. Paul said, "I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious" and told them they were worshipping in ignorance (Acts 17:22-23). In Paul's statement he said that God does not now accept ignorance as an excuse. Why? Because God has revealed His will to mankind.

In Titus 2:12, Paul penned these inspired words, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men." God's grace did not appear to SOME men, but for ALL men. God's grace teaches us to deny or reject ungodliness and worldly lust (that is, material desire). An individual has the responsibility to live soberly and righteously and godly in the world in which we now live, no matter what temptations we face. To be ignorant of this command is simply, in the mind of God, INEXCUSABLE.

We may be ignorant of the laws concerning taxes in this country, but the IRS will not allow our ignorance of tax laws to enable us to escape paying those taxes owed to the government. One may be ignorant of the tax law but he is still obligated to pay his taxes that are due. If one were to murder an individual and go before a judge to say, "I did not know it was against the law to murder," would ignorance of the law change the penalty?

Would a murderer be set free and not be held accountable because of ignorance of the law? Can you imagine what the court would reply if one pleaded ignorance of the law?

God does not wink or overlook ignorance of His law because His will has been revealed to mankind (II Tim. 3:16-17). Yet, the majority of individuals believe that God will certainly overlook their sins because of ignorance of His word. God has said He will not excuse an individual because of ignorance. Paul wrote concerning the end of the world and Judgment Day, "...the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God (ignorance) and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of His power..." (II Thess. 1:7-9). Paul wrote that Christians are to "speak the things which become sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1). Why? So that men will not be ignorant of sound doctrine, which is His word (II Tim. 4:1-4).

The Lord said through the prophet Hosea, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou has rejected knowledge I will also reject thee" (Hosea 4:6). It is a terrible thing to be rejected by God simply because one has rejected knowledge of what he must do. What does this say for man today? Jesus said, "If

ye abide in my word... Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free" (John 8:32). To reject knowledge is to reject truth. He also said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father except by me" (John 14:6). When one rejects truth, he rejects Christ and "the way" to the Father. When one rejects knowledge, he rejects his only hope of salvation. When one accepts ignorance as his excuse to not obey God, he has accepted damnation of his soul.

Many people believe that ignorance is a cloak for innocence, but in reality ignorance is a cloak for stupidity. "The fool hath said in his heart, 'There is no God'" (Psalm 14:1). To deny that God exists or that He will execute punishment upon the wicked is simply willful ignorance. God has no pity on willful ignorance. (Hebrews 10:26, 27; Acts 17:30, 31)

Do not accept ignorance as the safe way out. One must hear His call through the gospel (II Thess. 2:14; Romans 10:17) and obey it before it is too late. God does not want anyone to be lost, but wants all men to come to repentance (II Peter 3:9). One must realize that the fruit of ignorance is eternal damnation (II Thess. 1:7-9), and one cannot come to the Father except in faith and obedience to His word (Hebrews 5:8, 9; 11:6).

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THE RAPTURE (3)

by Dennis Gullledge

The Rapture Theory Contradicts Plain Bible Facts. First, it has too many comings of Christ: four, i.e., His coming into the world, His coming in the Rapture, His coming to establish His kingdom, and His final coming in the judgment. The Bible, however, speaks of only two. Three terms are used by the inspired writers to refer to Christ's return: "coming" (*parousia*—1 Thessalonians 4:15), "appearing" (*epiphaneia*—2 Timothy 4:1), and "revelation" (*apokalupsis*—2 Thessalonians 1:7). These terms are employed interchangeably and refer to the same event in time.

Second, it lays out an unfounded dispensational scheme to determine the end of time. It abuses 2 Peter 3:8, which says, "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a day," suggesting that the seven

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days of God's creation in Genesis are symbolic of a 7000 year probation for earth prior to eternity. Their teaching is: "The Scriptures imply that the Lord will bring everything to an end in 6000 years, and then will establish the 1000 year Millennial Kingdom . . . Thus,

. . . Jesus will return about 6000 years after the creation of Adam to fulfill the 7000 year plan." There is not one shred of Scripture sanction for any of this — especially in 2 Peter 3:8. That passage merely signifies the manner in which God regards time. It does not contain some sort of dispensational calendar to determine the end of time!

Third, it has only parts of humanity seeing Jesus at His second coming. They insist: "We can be sure that the select generation which will witness the return of Jesus to earth is none other than our own." Of this select generation they tell us that only certain righteous will see Christ. The Bible says, however, "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: And before Him shall be gathered all nations..." (Matthew 25:31-32). That hardly sounds like a portion of humanity seeing Christ when He returns.

Fourth, it contradicts John 5:28-29. Jesus will raise both classes of humanity the same hour — the righteous and unrighteous. The Rapture theory teaches that the righteous will be raised during the Rapture and the wicked at the end of 1000 years. An interval of 1007 years!

Fifth, it contradicts the last day passages (John 6:39-40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48). The end of time will mark the last day. The resurrection will be at the last day. The judgment will be at the last day. There is no room for a millennium.

Sixth, it contradicts 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, the very proof-text they like to use. Paul says saints will "ever be with the Lord" in heaven. The Lord's return will not be silent, secretive and seen only by a few. It will be the noisiest, most visible event in human history!

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*"Life with Christ is an endless hope,
without Him a hopeless end!"*

Busy souls have no time to be busy-bodies,

A WORD OF CAUTION

A few months ago we noticed an ad which appeared in some religious publications promoting a new version of the New Testament, called "The Christian Bible." Great claims have been made by its publisher, claiming "This is the only one that is literal, accurate, and in plain English!" This translation is put out by a group calling themselves the "Christian Bible Society" and giving their address with a Post Office box in Mammoth Spring, Arkansas. This has prompted several people to call or write to us (Church of Christ/Fulton County Gospel News of Mammoth Spring) and ask us what we know about this publication and society.

First, let me say emphatically that neither the Church of Christ in Mammoth Spring nor the paper which we publish, the Fulton County Gospel News, has any connection with this translation project or the "Christian Bible Society." We know nothing about it except what we have read in ads and a couple of articles promoting the new version. I wrote two letters to the address given in an attempt to find out more about this matter. After my second letter I received a response that did not answer many of the questions which I asked in my request for information. Second, the address here in Mammoth Spring is simply a "mail drop," where the mail is taken out of the box and forwarded to another address. Forwarding addresses in both St. Louis and Memphis have been used. A telephone number in Thayer, Mo. is answered by an answering machine, so no personal contact has been possible, although I have tried. These kinds of set-ups are sometimes used by persons involved in mail fraud, although we do not know if the "Christian Bible Society" is guilty of such.

Third, the claims made for this translation in its ads and articles about such are ludicrous. One ad decried the use of the words "Christ" and "Christian," saying that these words were not proper Biblical translations. Please note, however, that these people use the word "Christian" in their own name for their Bible and their society! Such a basic inconsistency as this does not permit us to put much trust in their ability to give us the "only ...literal, accurate..." New Testament. I was told in the letter I received that the only way I could receive the information about the translators' procedures and publisher's note was to purchase the Bible. Even though I was told of a guarantee, I wouldn't risk my money on a scheme that uses mail drops and refuses to answer basic questions as to the credentials of the translators and the procedures they used.

If the Bible translation and society mentioned above are for real, it is highly questionable if either deserves much attention. Since we have our true address in Mammoth Spring, AR and have been linked to this production in the minds of some who know of us through the Fulton County Gospel News, we thought it would be wise to inform you as we have above.

Ted J. Clarke
Editor

Being good is not enough; we must be good for something.

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; Revelation 2:10).

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).

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