

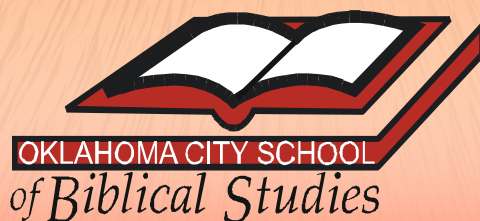
## 21st Annual Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies Lectures

The Restoration Plea    Modern Family Structure  
Church    New Age Religions/Revival of Paganism    Simplicity of Government  
believe    1<sup>st</sup> Century Church    **Challenges**    believe    FAITH  
**21<sup>st</sup> century church**  
Challenges    NEW    Worship    **restore**    Modern    Mergers & Pluralism    church    Simplicity    BIBLE  
Simplicity of Worship    FAMILY BIBLE love    Variations in Worship    Christ  
**Maintaining Hope**    alternative lifestyles



Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

**Hebrews 12:28**





### Preface

The 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Lectureship has a great theme and great subjects. “The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church” is our theme, and the lectureship will address subjects which the 21<sup>st</sup> century church faces in today’s world. How do the churches of Christ relate to the world of today?

Does the 21<sup>st</sup> century church bend to be winds of the world about us, or do we stand like an unbending mighty oak tree against the strong winds of change? Is there a truth that does not change which the churches of Christ must stand upon, “stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the world of the Lord?” (1 COR. 15:58) The 21<sup>st</sup> century church is in truth no different than the 1<sup>st</sup> century church, as Paul wrote to the church at Philippi: “in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.” (PHIL. 2:15) It is the purpose of the lectures in this lectureship book to address some of the “crooked and perverse” evils of today’s world.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century church is confronted daily with denominational doctrines calling the members of the churches of Christ into false teaching. More and more members of the churches of Christ are falling prey to such never-ending efforts. The weak teaching done in so many pulpits is not supplying members with the truth by which they can stand against the avalanche facing them daily. Even among our own brethren, we have those in “high places” who are confusing members by blurring the distinction between faith and opinion. Folks, our ability to use PowerPoint is not the same as instrumental music in worship! The song book is not another kind of music, but a musical instrument is!

The 21<sup>st</sup> century church is facing paganism like never before in America. The churches of Christ have long faced the those teaching that “one faith is just as good as another,” and “one church is just as good as another,” but now we hear: “one God is just as good as another.” Multiculturalism, pluralism, and new age religions are hitting churches of Christ at a rapid pace! The question is now being heard: “Can and should the church of the 1<sup>st</sup> century exist in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?” To be more honest, these folks are asking: “Can and should the 1<sup>st</sup> century teaching of Christ exist in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?” Human traditions have beat upon the churches of Christ for twenty centuries, and they continue to assail us today! Human traditions are just that, *human* traditions, and must never have any authority in the churches of Christ.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century church must be able to see the church triumphant through the timeless truth! Jesus promised his apostles that the Holy Spirit would guide them “into all truth” (JOHN 16:13), of which Peter wrote: “being begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 PET. 1:23). Churches of Christ must take their stand upon the inspired truth -- the truth breathed out by the mouth of God which “is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 TIM. 4:16-17) It is through this timeless truth that God guides the 21<sup>st</sup> century church. Will we submit to the once and for all delivered truth? Our identity and our salvation depend upon our doing so!

## Introduction to the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies

The Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies (OKCSBS) began its work in 1991. The curriculum is designed to prepare men to be leaders in the Lord's church (elders, preachers, deacons, teachers, etc.) and women to serve in the church (teachers, etc.). The curriculum is Bible-centered and is designed to prepare the student to become an independent student of the word of God. It is the intention of the faculty at OKCSBS that our students should not be taught "what to believe," but "how to learn from the Scriptures the will of God."

The curriculum varies to fit the needs of the individual students, but it is basically designed to consist of four years of classes. Students seeking advanced options may choose to attend extra courses in Greek and other subjects. Also, part-time and audit students may choose to just take one course or one night of courses each week at their convenience. By stretching the coursework out into a four-year format, there is a greater maturation in the learning process than in two-year programs. In addition, students can take advantage of our night schedule by continuing in secular work without needing to raise support from the church. By offering a schedule that fits people's busy lives, we allow our students to immediately increase their usefulness in local congregations.

Our faculty is experienced and dedicated. Frank Williams and Marion Fox both have experience as preachers, elders and as faculty members in other preacher training schools. Mike VonTungeln has preaching experience and currently serves as an elder. Benjamin Williams has experience as a minister and editor for the *One Heart Journal*, our school paper. We believe in the inerrancy and absolute authority of the Scriptures. We invite anyone to check out our school by contacting us and attending our classes. We are also available to make presentations about the school to any congregation that would like to learn more.

Marion R. Fox, director



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# Can the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church Exist in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

Benjamin J. Williams



Benjamin attended the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies and the University of Oklahoma, receiving BS in Astrophysics. He and his wife, Selene, have recently become the proud parents of their first son, Lucas. Benjamin has worked with the Barnes church of Christ since 2001. He is an instructor for the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies, serves as Editor for the *One Heart Journal*, serves as director of the “Faith Week” session at Frog Road Christian Camp, and also sits on the Board of Directors for the Board of Trustees for Frog Road Camp.

## INTRODUCTION

- A. What should the 21<sup>st</sup> Century church be?
  - 1. *The Second Incarnation*, by Rubel Shelly and Randall Harris
    - a. “Even if there were a perfect church, our proper task would not be to reproduce its forms ...” (p. 63).
    - b. “We reject a rigid ‘pattern theology’ that simply proposes to transplant religious-cultural forms from the Bible to the ... 21<sup>st</sup> century” (p. 63).
  - 2. These quotes are not presented to shock you, but rather to illustrate a way of thinking about the church of our Lord that is entirely common place among the religious world and the theological elite. These views, though varied, are typified by:
    - a. A belief that the church was intended to transform over time
    - b. A belief that the New Testament consists of statements of core values, rather than commands to be followed
    - c. A belief that the church of the New Testament CANNOT exist in our time, due to the changes of culture and society
  - 3. The last premise in that list is the theme for this year’s lectures. Do we live in a time where the church of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century can exist, or must we seek to continue the development of an alternative, ever-changing body of believers?
- B. How can we answer the question?
  - 1. First, we must consider the realistic challenges to reproducing the church of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. These concerns should be analyzed, and not dismissed out of hand. We cannot ignore that nearly 2000 years have passed since the institution we claim to be part of was established.
    - a. How many institutions do you know of that are 2000 years old?



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- (1) Morocco's University of Al-Karaouine was established in 859 AD and was named the "oldest existing educational institution in the world" by the Guinness Book of World Records.
  - (2) Japan's Kongo Gumi Co., Ltd., has been continuously operating for more than 1,400 years. Since AD 578, when the company built the still standing Shitennoji Temple, Kongo Gumi has had a hand in building Osaka Castle (16<sup>th</sup> century) and other famous Japanese buildings and temples.
  - (3) As far as governments go, San Marino's current constitution was ratified in 1600. However, there were several instances where foreign invaders occupied the tiny country and imposed different forms of government. The United States also makes a claim on the title of oldest continuous government, maintaining a constitution since 1789.
- b. Of those few institutions you might name that are even close to as old as the church, are they (a) entirely unchanged, (b) the same only in principle, or (c) fundamentally different than they were 2000 years ago?
  - c. This is not a minor consideration! The idea that an institution could be organized in the first century, duplicated autonomously all over the world, and then that it could retain its identity 2000 years later raises serious questions that need to be answered.
2. Second, we must investigate the nature of that institution in hopes of finding whether or not it is of a nature that can be reproduced in our own time. Is it helplessly tied to 1<sup>st</sup> Century cultural norms and structures? Or is it a system of faith that transcends any amount of time that might ever pass?
  3. Third, we must answer another difficult question: if the 1<sup>st</sup> Century church can be realized in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, should it be? Are we under an imperative to reach back through the ages to that church, or may we strive to build an institution more fitted to our time as we see it? Are we, as the atheists allege, trying to recreate Bronze Age mythology in a Post-Modern world?

## BODY

- I. Challenges to Reproducing the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church
  - A. Cultural Changes
    1. Political:
      - a. 1<sup>st</sup> Century: At the time of the 1<sup>st</sup> century church, Palestine was under imperial Roman rule, having been shuffled between other governments for the last several centuries. Jews had a strict view of the social structure of the world: Jew and Gentile. Jews worked hard not to associate with Gentiles. Judaism was

divided between two parties: the Pharisees, who taught strict adherence to both Law and Tradition, and the Sadducees, who worked toward cooperation with Greco-Roman government and philosophy.

- b. 21<sup>st</sup> Century: America enjoys a Republican form of government that stresses equal justice and protection under law. Social inequality is fiercely opposed.
2. Economic:
    - a. 1<sup>st</sup> Century: The economy of first century Palestine was largely agricultural. Social classes were enormously stratified: an Upper class of priests and aristocracy, a Middle class made of traders, merchants, and artisans, and a Lower class of laborers and the impoverished.
    - b. 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The American economy is largely specialized and technical. America's largest industries by employment are (1) educational, (2) medical, and (3) food. 1 in 300 Americans is a lawyer.
  3. Daily Life:
    - a. 1<sup>st</sup> Century: The common language in the Roman Empire was Greek. However, at the time it was common for Jews to also use Hebrew, Aramaic, and Latin. Life centered around markets and synagogues. Houses were all purpose 1-2 room squares, with dirt floors, flat roofs, low and narrow doorways, and front wooden doors.
    - b. 21<sup>st</sup> Century: 46.6% of Americans have internet access. The average home size in the United States was 2,330 square feet in 2004. According to Wal-Mart's corporate fact sheet, Wal-Mart shoppers worldwide spend a combined average of \$42,754,109 in sales per hour.
  4. Religious Setting:
    - a. 1<sup>st</sup> Century: Jewish leadership fought to maintain a belief in one God while fragmenting into hostile sectarianism. Jews believed God was invisible and beyond physical portrayal, while the Gentiles believed in many human-like gods who could be represented by images or idols.
    - b. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Culture: The 2001 Edition of the *World Christian Encyclopedia* claims that there are 33,820 denominations within Christianity. According to the Barna polling group, only a slight majority of those claiming to be Christians (55%) strongly agree that the Bible is accurate in all of the principles it teaches.
  5. Quick Answer: For Christianity to survive the extreme differences in culture, it must be independent of all cultural changes.
  6. ROMANS 12:2 "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."
- B. Transmission of Scriptures



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1. Tacitus was writing his famous *Annals* in AD 100, approximately the same time the New Testament was being written. Today, only 20 manuscripts exist of his text, of which the oldest was a copy of a copy of copy *ad infinitum* transcribed in AD 1100, one thousand years after the original was penned. Is it reasonable to believe that the New Testament Scriptures have been preserved well enough to be followed in our time?
  2. Reading the original copy, called an autograph, is unthinkable. Consider a more recent example to see the truth in this. Of Shakespeare's plays, no autograph manuscript exists today. If a whole field of literary study exists to determine the true text of Shakespeare's most famous plays, only 400 years old, how can we be certain of a text nearly 2000 years old?
  3. Quick Answer: God has evidently preserved the New Testament.
    - a. We have fragments of New Testament texts dating as far back as 114 AD.
    - b. We have whole books dating as far back as 200 AD
    - c. We have partial New Testaments dating as far back as 250 AD.
    - d. We have entire New Testaments dating as far back as 325 AD.
    - e. In total we have 5366 ancient copies of the New Testament to compare against each other, and they have a surprising amount of agreement.
    - f. In the British Museum, a researcher may look through sixteen volumes of early Christian writings containing 86,489 quotations from the New Testament.
  4. 1 PETER 1:24-25 "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."
- C. Twenty Centuries of Tradition
1. Interpretations of Interpretations
    - a. As an example, consider the peculiar Catholic doctrine of the Assumption of Mary. Though there is no statement in the Bible stating such, some believe that Mary was taken up into Heaven directly at the end of her life. In the fifth and sixth centuries, Pope Gelasius and Pope Hormisdas issued decrees which rejected this teaching as heresy and its proponents as heretics. In 1950, Pope Pius XII declared the doctrine to be official Roman Catholic doctrine. All three of these popes are claimed to be infallible by the Catholic Church.
    - b. This is not a uniquely Catholic problem either. If you read the writings of John Calvin (1509-1564), you will find him quoting Augustine (354-430) as an authority only slightly less frequently than Calvin quotes the Bible.
    - c. How can we recreate the church of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century if our view of it is obscured by 2000 years of interpretations?

2. Quick Answer: You can't! The New Testament was intended to be a first source for every Christian and never to be viewed through the interpretations of fallible men.
  - a. 2 PETER 1:12-14 "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance."
  - b. JUDE 3 "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."
  - c. 1 TIMOTHY 3:14-15 "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

#### D. Maintaining Hope

1. How Long Can We Wait for a Promise Already 2,000 Years Old?
  - a. It is well known that our faith in the promise of Christ's Second Coming makes Christianity a laughingstock to many. How long should we wait on this promise until we decide to throw in the towel?
  - b. We should remember that humanity waited 4,000 years for God to fulfill the promise of Christ's First Coming, and it proved to be well worth the wait.
2. People already doubted in the days of the 1st Century, and we would do well to remember Peter's response to their doubt. 2 PETER 3:1-9 "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some

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men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

## E. Won't the Church Dwindle If It Does Not Change?

1. The only real challenge to reproducing the church of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century in our own time is overcoming the pride of our own hearts that tells us we know best. We seem to be fully convinced of the notion that we could design a better system for the modern world than what is revealed in the New Testament.
2. ISAIAH 55:8-13 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

## II. Universality of the New Testament Church

### A. Simplicity of Worship

1. Song, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs (EPH. 5:19)
  - a. There is no culture on the earth that does not sing.
  - b. The New Testament does not specify the musical genre to be used, only the content of the words.
  - c. Even when considering the words, the New Testament does not dictate any specific words necessary. Man is free to adapt the message and themes of the Scriptures to music.
2. Preaching/Teaching (ACTS 20:7; 2 TIM. 4:2)
  - a. The New Testament does not prescribe any language as necessary to be used in preaching and teaching.
  - b. The Bible has been translated into 2,287 languages across the world.
  - c. No special license or ordainment is required to preach, only a sincere commitment to studying and presenting God's Word.
  - d. Even those without a sincere desire sometimes do some good! PHP. 1:15-18 “Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to

my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.”

### 3. Giving

- a. No monetary system is specified. No percent is specified.
- b. The only requirements are that giving be based on personal prosperity and that the offering be made with a cheerful heart (2 COR. 9:7; 1 COR. 16:2).

### 4. Prayer

- a. No specific prayer language or posture is required by the New Testament.
- b. Furthermore, every New Testament Christian is his own priest under the mediation of the High Priest, Jesus Christ (1 PETER 2:5; HEB. 9:11)

### 5. The Lord’s Supper

- a. The Lord’s Supper upon the first day is the most specific of the acts described as part of New Testament worship (1 COR. 11:23-34).
- b. There is no region in the inhabited world where some form of grain and grape do not grow. Bread and grape juice are universal.
- c. No ordained server or blessed bread or juice is required by the New Testament.

### 6. Universal Application

- a. No special place is required for New Testament worship.
- b. We have examples of teaching by the sea, on a mount, in an upper room, in the courts of governors, and in the synagogue of the Jews.
- c. JOHN 4:20-24 “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

## B. Simplicity of Doctrine

### 1. The Story of Christ

- a. The New Testament presents one character as the centerpiece of all doctrine – Jesus Christ (1 COR. 2:2; 3:11).
- b. No passage even hints at a pantheon of gods and demigods to be worshipped or even considered. No constellation of “saints” acting as patrons of men is offered, instead we are told that there is one intercessor between God and man – the man Christ Jesus (1 TIM. 2:5).

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- c. The four accounts of Christ present a unified image of Christ's character, life, and teaching. Issues such as the "synoptic problem" and "missing gospels" are diversions created to mitigate the overwhelming unity of New Testament doctrine.
- 2. The Necessity of Baptism
  - a. It requires a considerable degree of expertise in subterfuge to hide the New Testament doctrine of baptism.
  - b. Jesus taught it (MARK 16:16) and obeyed it with the Father's approval (MATT. 3:13-17). The Apostles taught it (ACTS 2:38, ROMANS 6:4, 1 PETER 3:21) and the converts obeyed it (read the book of Acts!).
  - c. No complicated ritual is required for baptism outside of the faith, penitence, and confession of the candidate ... and the presence of water (ACTS 8:35-38). Conveniently, our planet is over 70% covered with water.
- 3. The Certainty of Judgment
  - a. Despite the convoluted efforts of Premillennialism and other dogmas to hide this simple fact, the Bible teaches a simple doctrine concerning judgment.
  - b. ACTS 1:11 "Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."
  - c. HEBREWS 9:27 "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:"
- C. Simplicity of Government
  - 1. Lordship, not Hierarchy
    - a. No electoral council, bishopric, or hierarchy is ever suggested or contemplated in all of the New Testament. Instead, the inspired writers presented a simple chain of command.
    - b. 1 CORINTHIANS 11:3 "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."
    - c. Congregations of the Lord's people can exist on different continents, entirely unaware of each or any other congregation and still be organized according to the New Testament order.
  - 2. Autonomy, not Councils
    - a. The local church is given a system of elders/shepherds and deacons/servants (1 TIMOTHY 3). However, this arrangement is entirely autonomous (self-governing) and not answerable to any central council.
    - b. No synod or council will ever dictate amended doctrine to the congregations of the New Testament church, because the only guide offered by the Apostles was their own writings, to be studied and obeyed by all (2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17).

#### D. Simplicity of Work

##### 1. Evangelism

- a. The Apostles were sent to begin the expansion of the church by witnessing those things that they had seen in all the world (MARK 16:15-20).
- b. The Apostles instructed the local churches to assume the attitude of Christ (PHI. 2:5-8), and just as Christ went to Calvary to save sinners, we are to go out as well with Christ to save others (HEB. 13:12-13).

##### 2. Benevolence

- a. The New Testament church recognized that benevolence was an essential response to the love that Christ has shown us (ACTS 2:44-45).
- b. While they knew that evangelism was their primary work, no brother should stand idly by while another had need (GAL. 6:10).
- c. The New Testament does not offer a complicated formula for giving. They were told to take advantage of their weekly gathering as an opportunity to give as each man could: 1 CORINTHIANS 16:2 “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”

##### 3. Edification

- a. The goal of the New Testament church was to strengthen each member so that they could better serve Christ. EPHESIANS 4:15-16 “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”
- b. No member was to be valued differently from another based on race, gender, or social standing (GAL. 3:28).

#### III. The Restoration Plea

A. Hopefully, the preceding points have established that a church could exist in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that followed the order of the church of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Our remaining task is to determine whether or not the Scriptures put on us a moral imperative to do so. Does the Bible make a “restoration plea”?

B. “Neither the Right nor the Left”

1. An oft repeated Old Testament theme was that whenever God gives a direction, the Lord’s servant will “turn not from it to the right hand or to the left” (DEUTERONOMY 5:32; 17:11,20; 28:14; JOSHUA 1:7; 23:6; 2 KINGS 22:2; 2 CHRONICLES 34:2; PROVERBS 4:27).

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2. This principle is applied to every aspect of life, from abstaining from the worship of false Gods to conquering the land of Canaan to serving as a king over God's people. Wherever God had set a path, it was wrong and destructive to stray from it in any other direction.
  3. Is the New Testament any less a path? Are we any less obligated to forsake every other path to follow the one path set by God?
- C. "Seek the Old Paths"
1. When God's people faced peril, His prophet gave them a simple answer: JEREMIAH 6:16 "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein."
  2. They did not need a new strategy anymore than we do. God's way works, and failure lies down every other road.
  3. Where would we find the "old path" for the church other than following the New Testament order?
- D. "Upon This Rock I Will Build My Church"
1. I may arbitrarily paint, retile, reroof, tear down, or remodel my house. I cannot do the same for yours. Ownership gives the right to rule and design that which is ruled.
  2. Christ claims ownership over His church (MATT. 16:18). What right has any man to build another or to claim to build that same church but in a different manner?
- E. If we change it once, where would we stop?
1. What changes to New Testament order are acceptable and which are not? Those that propose such changes are quick to shoot down any notion of law or pattern in the New Testament, but have you noticed that they have not replaced it with limits of their own? Is it because in the absence of the New Testament pattern no boundary remains for what a church may or may not do or be?
  2. May we add instruments? May we add hierarchy? May we remove baptism? May we remove worship?
- F. Simplicity
1. The only way to maintain the universal applicability of the New Testament order is to maintain the simplicity with which it was given.
  2. The first time we add or ignore one word in God's Word we remove the basis of unity. Look at the splintered denominational world and tell me if that is an attractive alternative?



## CONCLUSION

- A. The 1<sup>st</sup> century church can exist today because of the simplicity of its doctrine and practices.
- B. The 1<sup>st</sup> century church must exist today because we have no right to be anything else.

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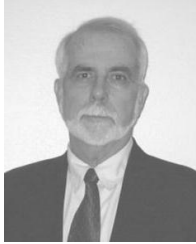
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## Can the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church Exist in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

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# The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Family

Dwight Brown



Dwight is a native of Wynnewood, OK. He and his wife, Linda, have three children. He attended Midwest Christian College and the Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver, obtaining a BA in Christian Ministries. Dwight has been preaching for over thirty-six years, including working with local congregations in Kansas, Texas, Missouri, and Oklahoma. He began his present work with the church of Christ in Maysville, OK less than a year ago, and this is his first time speaking on the Annual Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies Lectures.

## INTRODUCTION

- A. Families have always been under attack.
  - 1. Review of OT families
  - 2. Review of NT families
  - 3. Review of the family in the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- B. Pattern of the family
  - 1. Origin of the family
  - 2. God calls parents to be honorable.
- C. Lost faith and conviction in the pattern
- D. What is the difference between the family in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
  - 1. Society's acceptance of unrighteousness
- E. Choices the family must make
  - 1. Spiritual distraction
  - 2. Paying the consequences
  - 3. Scripted morality
  - 4. The honor role
  - 5. What is your price
  - 6. Choose for yourself

## FAMILIES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN UNDER ATTACK: A BRIEF REVIEW OF FAMILIES

### I. PATTERN OF THE FAMILY

- A. Its Origin
  - 1. Man was created in the image of God and was to be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth and subdue it. ("dominion over," GENESIS 1:27)

## The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Family

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2. God had a plan and a design.
  3. God placed Adam in the garden to work it and take care of it.
  4. God had Adam name all the animals and finding no suitable helper.
  5. Before God created Adam's female counterpart he wanted Adam to see his own deep need of companionship. The process of naming all the animals and seeing that all of them had mates made Adam sense his great need for companionship. Adam no doubt felt his aloneness. When Adam senses his own deep need, God creates woman.
  6. At this event God initiates family life. (GENESIS 2:21-25)
- B. In LUKE 3:38 Luke calls Adam the son of God. God created the human race to be his very own children.
1. God's purpose and design for his children would be through the family.
  2. God in the beginning gave foundational instruction for the family that would keep it solid and keep it strong.
  3. The home was the institution that God ordained to fulfill His purpose. The foundation of society began with the home.
  4. God created everything in an orderly fashion as He puts first things first.
  5. The home was primary in the establishment of society.
  6. The home is the basic building block of all human relationships. (GENESIS 2:26-27)
- C. Obedience to God is the basic principle of all life. The basic principle of the home is spiritual in nature. It was established before as the foundation of Adam's life before he had a wife. Obedience to God was the foundation of God's original family in Eden. Without observing this basic principle life deteriorates. (GENESIS 3:6,7; 4:8-11)
1. When one looks to God's family in Eden, we realize that the best efforts of parents will not always prevent children from going astray. It was not God that failed.
  2. It was Satan's intention to destroy God's plan through his attack on the home.
  3. God points out to Israel that spiritual instruction is essential.
    - a. The spiritual lives of Mom and Dad are the foundational principles for the lives of the children.
    - b. DEUTERONOMY 4:9 "... teach them to your children and to their children."
  4. We may look at teaching as a lecture to be given to our children, but it has more to do with how we live. It has to do with allowing God's principles to move from our own hearts to their hearts. Love the Lord God with all your heart, soul, and strength. Talk about them at home and when you walk, when you lie down and when you get up. (DEUTERONOMY 6:5-9)
  5. Children must be instructed as to why the parents live the way they live. They need to know the ethics you practice are found in God's principles for living.

6. This instruction is done from the mutual respect of children and parents. Mutual respect requires both the parents and the children to seek obedience to God. Parents must practice what they preach. EPHESIANS 6:1-4
  - a. Our children live in a hostile world. Satan's influence on their lives is real (movies, PlayStations, music, magazines, dancing, sports, activities, etc.).
  - b. You have to live the life you want them to live.

## II. GOD CALLS PARENTS TO BE HONORABLE

- A. Parents must first obey the principles taught to their children.
- B. Children will see and understand your value system.
  1. EPHESIANS 6:1-4
  2. DEUTERONOMY 11:19-21
- C. It is said, "A soul rises or falls on how the first commandment is kept. A society rises or falls on what we do with the fifth commandment for the basic unit of society is the family. If the family falls apart, society will fall apart."
- D. The family fails when honor is lost.
- E. Christianity is a taught religion.
  1. Parents must exemplify whatever it is they want their children to be.
  2. It is said, "We need to remember that our children did not evolve from monkeys, but monkeys and children have a common trait - 'monkey see, monkey do'. Our children's behavior is caught rather than taught."
  3. If we are not an example of seeking God first and walking in righteousness, our children will most likely choose their own path.
  4. God chose Abraham because he knew that Abraham would exemplify how his children should live. Abraham rearing his children to follow God was crucial to God's plan to save the world. (GENESIS 18:16-19)
- F. How to be honorable parents
  1. To be worthy of honor we must live consistent lives ourselves. (COLOSSIANS 3:20,21)
  2. The surest way to embitter your children is by saying one thing and doing another, by always blaming and never praising, by being inconsistent and unfair in discipline, by showing favoritism, by making promises and never keeping them.
  3. To be honorable does not mean that we or our children will be perfect.
  4. Honor has to do with how we deal with the imperfections in others and ourselves.
  5. Honor allows us and others to learn from mistakes.
  6. Honor must be earned. A position of authority does not ensure that those who occupy that position are honorable.
- G. The influence of a mother
  1. A God given role.

# The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Family

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2. When women buy into the feminist message of today, they miss out on the best part of being a woman.
  - a. They fail to understand the role that godly-thinking women can contribute to the world through the home.
  - b. There is absolutely nothing that compares with the influence of a mother.
  - c. The influences of politics, education, and peers pale in significance compared to the influence of a mother.
  - d. God speaks about the role of women in the home.
    - (1) 1 TIMOTHY 5:14
    - (2) TITUS 2:3-5
3. The woman is the one who makes a house a home through her godly influence.
4. PROVERBS 31 plainly teaches that a woman is qualified to do many things.
5. Women have power to influence the home.
  - a. 1 PETER 3:1-4
  - b. 2 TIMOTHY 1:2-7
6. Mothers write on the hearts of their children what the rough hand of the world cannot erase.

## III. CHOICES THE FAMILY MUST MAKE

- A. Spiritual distractions
  1. Please do not think that influence is an incidental matter. (2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-17)
  2. Parents are to know what is going on in the lives of their children. (1 JOHN 2:15,16)
- B. Paying the consequence
  1. Do not be deceived. (GALATIANS 6:7,8)
  2. Care for them spiritually, emotionally, and physically.
  3. Do not eliminate consequences in their lives. (HEBREWS 12:6-11)
- C. Scripted morality: Society's view of the life and the family
- D. The honor role
  1. School vs Bible
  2. Do not be deceived in this matter, children, Bible knowledge is not a secondary matter. (MATTHEW 6:33)
- E. What is your price?
  1. Everyone has their price.
  2. Things that need to be taught -- There is always a cost, a price, for everything whether good or bad.
    - a. GALATIANS 6:7
    - b. 2 CORINTHIANS 9:6
  3. When we choose one thing in most cases, something else has to be excluded.

- a. MATTHEW 6:24 - Two masters
  - b. 2 PETER 2:19,20 - They promised freedom, but they were slaves.
  - c. MATTHEW 16:26 - For what profits a man
- F. Choose for yourself
- 1. Fathers, where are the members of your family in their spiritual life?
  - 2. God gave you the responsibilities to lead in their spiritual growth. (EPHESIANS 6:4)
  - 3. God desires for fathers to teach. (DEUTERONOMY 6:5-9)
  - 4. Are you doing your job? (JOSHUA 24:15)

## CONCLUSION

- A. The family will always be under siege.
- B. The victory is staying with the pattern God has put in place.
- C. Each father and mother must rise to meet the challenges. For if you don't, who will for your children?





# Does Culture Change Doctrine?

Bennie Henson



Bennie is a native of Okemah, OK. He and his wife, Mary, have three children. Bennie graduated from the Elk City School of Preaching as well Bethel College, where he received a BA in Bible and Religion. He began preaching in 1966. Since then he has performed local works in Oklahoma and Kansas. In that time, he has also worked with 2 schools of preaching and taught on a weekly radio program. He has been with the Midway Church in Lawton, OK since 1987. He retired as Comanche County Director of Children and Family Services after 18 plus years.

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## INTRODUCTION

- A. In researching the concept of culture, I found a nineteenth century humanist, English poet, and essayist named Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), who used the word "culture" to refer to an ideal of individual human refinement, of "the best that has been thought and said in the world. This concept of culture is a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world."
- B. That appears to be a very noble concept in relation to any culture. People like the term "the best." And, in truth, most people cling to their religious beliefs simply because, to them, their religion is "the best." Yet, whom or what is the source of anything or anyone being able to claim, "I have the best," as this BEST relates to what is THOUGHT and what is SAID in Bible doctrine? Man's concept of what is "best" has brought forth an endless stream of ideas, writings and books which constantly reflect and claim what was "best" is now "better." And, with this ongoing influx of endless claims of improving our culture toward being the "best," there is an accompanying effort to change Bible doctrine to make that doctrine "better," even if God's inspired word has to be made a bit more flexible or compromised or just totally changed. What are some of the factors that would cause one to believe that his thoughts or words are "better" than what God, by inspiration, has given us? Indeed, addressing the problem of changing what the Word of God says is a problem; which begins with how we think, as our thinking is the origin of our speaking.

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## BODY

- I. Lineage of Cain; lineage of Seth – a difference in “cultures”? GEN. 4 & 5
  - A. Note GEN. 4:9-15 & 4:23-24. God had pronounced a curse on anyone who would kill Cain ... obviously the best to be thought or said in the world. Lamech, in the trust he had in his own thinking and ability, quoted God’s own words, and his thoughts, centered in how he saw himself, brought forth words he deemed BETTER. The pursuit of this type of thinking led to what preceded the flood (GEN. 6:1-5) and the tower of Babel (GEN. 11:1-5) after the flood.
  - B. Sodom and Gomorrah in GEN. 18-19 is yet another example of man’s thoughts and words resulting in actions wherein God said, “... their sin is very grievous ...”
    1. An actor received an Oscar for playing the role of a gay man who caught aids and died ... so this “renown” man flaunted his role and in his acceptance speech. His thoughts and words, centered in himself, has a type of culture wherein God accepts gay people as they are. No one’s thoughts and words in any culture can change what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah ... no matter how renowned they assume they are (also see ROM 1:18-32; note verses 26-27).
  - C. Culture can and does influence to the point of one being blinded to what truth is by seeing themselves as being renown. They have made a name for themselves and enjoy it; so much so, their thoughts and words by reason of how they see themselves, advocate for themselves to justify all they think or say. And, like Lamech, they can go beyond God and His word, finding words to make any “religious” practice or belief acceptable to God. They have a renowned position in their culture and are now a part of the best which has been thought and said in the world, repeating a pattern of thinking and speaking similar to those previous to the flood as well as those at the tower of Babel. See 1 COR. 14:37-38; GAL 6:1-3. A.T. Robertson writes concerning GALATIANS 6:3:

Verse 3 from Greek, “Something when he is nothing [ti mēden ōn]. Thinks he is a big number being nothing at all (neuter singular pronouns). He is really zero. He deceiveth himself [phrenapatāi heauton]. Late compound word [phrēn], mind, [apataō], lead astray), leads his own mind astray.” (A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*)

1. Most, if not all, of us have at some time been deceived. NOTE GAL. 6:7; GAL. 2:1-21; Think about deceiving self; “Oh, he KNOWS he’s wrong, he is just too proud to admit it.” We can deceive self, and when our thoughts elevate us to think we are something which in truth we are not before God, for a fact, we have indeed deceived ourselves by the most harmful and hurtful deception known to man!
2. Note the example of Jeroboam, first king of northern kingdom:

- a. 1 KINGS 11:28-40. God spoke and revealed to Jeroboam everything Jeroboam needed to know about receiving and keeping the Northern Kingdom. When Solomon sought to kill Jeroboam, he took refuge in Egypt, and was greatly influenced by the false religious culture of this nation.
  - b. 1 KINGS 12:25-31. He consulted with himself because of how he saw himself, giving no consideration to what God had said or what God's will was as to the concerns he (Jeroboam) was having about losing the kingdom. Living among the idolatrous Egyptians, he would have been encouraged to join them in becoming a part of "the best that had been said and thought." Note DEUT. 11:16, "Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them;"
  - c. 1 KINGS 13:1-9. The prophet of God spoke God's Word to Jeroboam, giving Jeroboam evidence that he was God's prophet; but NOTE, Jeroboam could only respond, not with sorrow for his sin, but concern for himself!
  - d. 1 KINGS 13:33-14:10. One who has deceived himself uses deceit, with little regard for God's deity, acting in a manner so as to reflect God as being less than God actually is! Thus, he has a sense of false security, and the deception he has brought on himself becomes an encouragement to do his own thinking and boldly speak to spiritual issues which his eye has seen and his ear has heard because this deception has entered into his own heart! The religious culture of the nation in which we live fosters the heresy of self deception with claims of revelation from every conceivable source one can imagine ... except that one true source, the word of God!
- D. Cultural Influences on RENOWN "Religious Leaders" in America:
- 1. Example One:
    - a. This comes from an interview with a prominent preacher:

**Q:** Tell me, what do you think is the future of Christianity?

**A:** Well, Christianity and being a true believer--you know, I think there's the Body of Christ. This comes from all the Christian groups around the world, outside the Christian groups. I think everybody that loves Christ, or knows Christ, whether they're conscious of it or not, they're members of the Body of Christ. And I don't think that we're going to see a great sweeping revival, that will turn the whole world to Christ at any time. I think James answered that, the Apostle James in the first council in Jerusalem, when he said that God's purpose for this age is to call out a people for His name. And that's what God is doing today, He's calling people out of the world for His name, whether they come from the Muslim world, or the Buddhist world, or the Christian world or the non-believing world, they are members of the Body of Christ because they've been called by God. They may not even know the name of

# Does Culture Change Doctrine?

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Jesus but they know in their hearts that they need something that they don't have, and they turn to the only light that they have, and I think that they are saved, and that they're going to be with us in heaven.

b. NOTE: There is no reference to God's Word ... the SOURCE is totally SELF!

## 2. Example Two:

a. This comes from an interview with a prominent preacher:

**Q:** What if you're Jewish or Muslim, you don't accept Christ at all?

**A:** You know, I'm very careful about saying who would and wouldn't go to heaven. I don't know ...

**Q:** If you believe you have to believe in Christ? They're wrong, aren't they?

**A:** Well, I don't know if I believe they're wrong. I believe here's what the Bible teaches and from the Christian faith this is what I believe. But I just think that only God will judge a person's heart. I spent a lot of time in India with my father. I don't know all about their religion. But I know they love God. And I don't know. I've seen their sincerity. So I don't know. I know for me, and what the Bible teaches, I want to have a relationship with Jesus.

b. NOTE in reference to these two examples: JOB 12:9-13:10; JOHN 6:44-45; JOHN 14:1-9; JOHN 17:20-23; PHIL. 2:5-11; that, beloved, is the BEST that has been thought and said, for all mankind forever.

## 3. Example Three

a. This comes from an article about a prominent preacher in our brotherhood:

“Some people find the name of 'Church of Christ' to be an insurmountable barrier, Scripture urges us to remove cultural hindrances while remaining scripturally true. In addition, this is one of a handful of Church of Christ congregations that include musical instruments in their Sunday evening services, as well as at "20-to-30 something" morning services, which they hold in the fellowship hall. The three Sunday morning services in the main worship center will remain a cappella. Most Church of Christ congregations have used only a cappella worship music throughout their history. The denomination, first recognized in 1906, is the most conservative of the three Restoration's streams (the other two being the Disciples of Christ and the Christian Churches). Other distinctives include an emphasis on New Testament Christianity, congregational independence, weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, and the necessity of baptism for salvation. HE, like many Church of Christ ministers, no longer believes that last teaching.”

- b. Note: the following is from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, about the minister of the above named 'Church of Christ':

HE was named "America's Pastor" by Christianity Today magazine and in 2005 was named by Reader's Digest as "The Best Preacher in America." He has been featured on The Fox News Channel, NBC Nightly News, Larry King Live, and USA Today. His books are regularly on the New York Times Best Seller List. He has been featured speaker at the National Prayer Breakfast.

- c. As regards "baptism," this renowned minister, i.e. "The Best Preacher in America," wrote a "teaching position" which is defined as, "A teaching position serves to articulate the convictions of the O H (church) leadership on a particular doctrine or practice." The title of this "teaching position" is "BAPTISM: THE DEMONSTRATION OF DEVOTION." In all fairness to the author, I suggest you read the entire article online. I submit it as another example of the influence of culture to encourage an attitude of going beyond the inspired Word of God.

"If you have never been baptized in any form, you will need to 'demonstrate your devotion' by baptism in order to be a member at O H (church)."

- d. God's Word does use the word "member" only to refer to one who has been baptized by the authority of Christ in accordance with God's inspired Word. See ROM. 12:4-5 (ROM. 6 tells WHEN one becomes a member); I COR. 12:12-13.

"With the exception of the thief on the cross, there is no example of an unbaptized believer. The thief on the cross, however, is a crucial exception. His conversion drives dogmatists crazy. It is no accident that the first one to accept the invitation of the crucified Christ has no creed, confirmation, christening, or catechism. How disturbing to theologians to ascend the mountain of doctrine only to be greeted by an uneducated thief who cast his lot with Christ. Here is a man who never went to church, never gave an offering, never was baptized, and said only one prayer. But that prayer was enough. He has a crucial role in the gospel drama. The thief reminds us that though our dogma may be airtight and our doctrine dead-center, in the end it is Jesus who saves. Does his story negate the importance of obedience? No, it simply puts obedience in proper perspective. Any step taken is a response to a salvation offered, not an effort at salvation earned. In the end, God has the right to save any heart, for he and only he sees the heart."

- e. This renowned minister "makes his case" by asserting things about the thief on the cross WHICH, BY THE TEACHING OF INSPIRED REVELATION, HE IN FACT DOES

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NOT KNOW! Note PRO. 18:12-15. This “renowned” minister draws words and ideas about the thief on the cross that does not come from God’s Word, but from culture of many religious people who have used this Bible example of this thief to assert baptism is not essential! Also, Jesus followed “And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. 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 12:47-48); with, “For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak” (JOHN 12:49-50). His assertion that only God sees the heart does not warrant the assumption “God has the right to save any heart,” else the Word God gave His Son Jesus is not true!

- II. A truly humble heart full of love for God compels a trusting faith in His word ALWAYS resulting in the precise action/obedience found in that word, and thus the faith whereby one can access God’s saving grace. (Note GEN. 5:22-24; 6:8-22) This attitude of being humble is depicted in the Bible as an essential element in seeking God’s Word above all else; and thus, in refusing to allow culture to determine the doctrine of the church.
  - A. Pharaoh’s failure to comply to God’s Word to let His children go is referred to as the refusal of Pharaoh to humble himself before God. (EXODUS 10:3)
  - B. Being humble is linked to the Israelites obeying God’s commandments when they were in the wilderness, DEUT. 8:2, less they say,”... My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth.” (DEUT. 8:17)
  - C. It was essential when Israel wanted God to hear prayer and forgive sins. (2 CHR. 7:13-15)
  - D. One of the biggest problems across our nation comes from those who have advocated for cultural, unbiblical, changes in the role of women. Their whole philosophy is based on a false assumption, that submission means inequality. (EPH. 5:22-25)
  - E. A closely related issue is family ties, emphasized in such a way so as to demand such is the ultimate bond we all have. This is what our culture often demands. And, it can bring divisive attitudes into the church. (MATT 10:34-39; 12:47-50)
  - F. To be associated with the “best that has been thought and said” often carries a demand for concessions and compromise. (1 TIM. 6:3-5)
    - 1. Concessions and compromise may serve to increase the number of people in a congregation, but it may also endanger one’s relationship with God. (REV. 2:18-20)
    - 2. Culture often demands we be more tolerant, and often place an emphasis on God’s grace which is not based on Biblical doctrine. (TITUS 1:10-2:1)



- a. As Paul said (1 COR. 15:10), we are what we are by the grace of God.
- b. When Jesus instituted partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, He said, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." (LUKE 22:20) By inspiration, Paul wrote the same to the church in Corinth. (1 COR. 11:23-27)
- c. The only account of blood in the death of Jesus on the cross is found in JOHN 19:30; His blood was shed in his death.
- d. In ROMANS 3:23-26, we can be "... justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." Note ROM. 4:24-25 (also 1 COR. 15:16-17). The resurrection of Christ is essential for our justification.
- e. Thus, it is "through our Lord Jesus Christ ... we have access by faith into this grace ..." (ROM. 5:1-2)
- f. ROM. 6:3-18. Baptism is the exact time faith can access God's grace as one puts his trust in God's grace by the blood of Christ.
- g. This is called "the operation of God" in COL. 2:12.
- h. It is a "walk" wherein the Christian continues to trust in the blood of Christ as one who continues to "walk in the light." 1 JOHN 1:7.

#### EXAMPLE REFERENCES:

1. Television interview of Billy Graham by Robert Schuller. Part 1, an approximately 7-minute-long broadcast in Southern California on Saturday, May 31, 1997. The following is an exact transcript\* of an excerpt close to the end of this broadcast.
2. Joel Osteen on Larry King Live, the following very disturbing conversation occurred with Larry King and Joel Osteen.
3. Max Lucado from *Christianity Today* article; "An Unusual Church of Christ," Lucado has been making some controversial changes, By Cindy Crosby, March 1, 2004.
4. Baptism article from: <http://www.maxlucado.com/pdf/baptism.upwords.pdf>

## Does Culture Change Doctrine?

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# Can the Church “Out Worldly” the World?

Dan Fredman



Dan attended the Barnes church of Christ in 1952 and attended the nearby Schwartz school, which was one of the last one-room schools in the state. He attended Oklahoma Christian College from 1967-1993, receiving a Bachelor's in Bible. He also attended Harding's Christian Communication Program (CCP) from 1980-1982. He and his wife, Pam, have three children. Dan has done local work for congregations in three states, including his current work with the church in Broken Bow, OK, where he also teaches a "Preaching Class" on Sunday afternoons.

## INTRODUCTION

- A. It is an honor to be invited back to speak at this lectureship once again.
  - 1. Of course, it is and always will be a homecoming for me to come back to the Barnes congregation.
  - 2. I am very proud of the work that this congregation is doing in preparing men to preach the gospel of Christ.
- B. My topic for this evening is an interesting one.
  - 1. I had to read Frank's email a couple of times to make sure it wasn't just a typo.
  - 2. Can the church “out worldly” the world – the answer to this is obvious – YES!
  - 3. The real question is, can the church “out worldly” the world and still be the Lord's church?
  - 4. This is the question we will address over the next little while as we study together.

## BODY

- I. Clarifying terms.
  - A. We must understand what we are talking about when addressing this question.
    - 1. The question we are asking is this: Can the church be more like the world than the world itself?
    - 2. Can we, as Christians, take on, participate in, the activities of the world?
    - 3. Here, it is natural to think of only worldly activities such as gambling, dishonesty, supporting activities that benefit organizations that are not moral organizations, etc.
  - B. Brethren, when we talk about the church being more like the world than the world itself, we are talking especially religiously.

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1. Can the Lord's church participate with, merge with, or work with denominations and other religions?
  2. We are asking, can the church adopt the unbiblical practices of other religious groups and still be right with God?
  3. Brethren, what we are talking about is compromise. Can the Lord's church compromise with other religions, with those of the world and still be right with God?
- II. From the beginning, God's people have always been tempted to compromise with the religious world around them.
- A. Think of Israel serving the Baals in the time of the Judges.
1. JUDGES 2:11-12 “Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals, and they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the LORD to anger.”
  2. Do not misunderstand the statement here that says they "forsook" the Lord.
  3. This is describing God's viewpoint of what happened.
  4. These people never stood up and said we are not going to serve "God" anymore – they never denied the existence of God and, they never ceased worshipping God.
  5. They were combining their worship of Baal with their worship of God.
- B. Think about what King Solomon did during his reign.
1. 1 KINGS 11:4 “For it came about when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.”
    - a. This passage describes what I am talking about.
    - b. Notice – his heart was not WHOLLY devoted to God.
  2. Notice a couple of more verses that emphasize the same thing.
  3. 1 KINGS 11:6 “And Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father had done.”
  4. 1 KINGS 11:9 “Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice,”
  5. God did not accept a “kinda sorta” following of Him by Solomon. It was all or nothing.
- C. These people never denied God, never stopped worshipping God.
1. They followed the Law of Moses. They kept the sacrifices and feast days.
  2. What they did was mingle the religion of God with the false religions around them.
  3. They did both. They essentially compromised God's law to mingle with those around them.

4. This is made pretty plain in Amos 5 where God tells His chosen people how he feels about worship offered to Him under these conditions.
5. AMOS 5:21-24 "I hate, I reject your festivals, Nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; And I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings. Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."
6. Amos prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam II of Israel.
  - a. Israel had gone a long way into merging the worship of God with that of idol worship and turning it all into ritual worship.
  - b. While Judah had not gone this far, they also had their high places where sacrifices were offered to idols while, at the same time, maintaining their ritual worship of God commanded under the law.
  - c. Here, in this passage from Amos, God, Himself, tells us exactly how He feels about this compromising of religions.
  - d. Notice the extreme language God uses: hate; reject; will not look, accept, or listen. Do we get the point? God is not happy when those who claim to be His people are more interested in being like those around them than like God.
- D. Even in the NT we read of this.
  1. LUKE 7:30 "But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John."
  2. It was not that these people rejected John the Baptist. The problem is that they were rejecting God's purpose, God's intent for them.
  3. MARK 7:9 "He was also saying to them, You nicely set aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition."
  4. Jesus is telling these people they are not right with God. They are condemned before God.
  5. Yet, these were the very people who stressed the keeping of God's law, stressed doing exactly what the law said.
  6. They had compromised God's law to fit in with their own desires and understandings, and God was not pleased.
- E. We must understand that to compromise with the world, to try to be like the world, is to reject God.

### III. The church and the world are totally incompatible.

- A. Our Lord came and established His church (MATT. 16:18).
  1. It is not by the world or of the world. It is the Lord's church.

# Can the Church “Out Worldly” the World?

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2. He bought it with His own blood. (ACTS 20:28)
  3. He is the head of it. (EPH. 1:22; 5:23; COL. 1:18)
  4. All that is done in the church, by the church, is to be done by the authority of Christ.
  5. COLOSSIANS 3:17 “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”
  6. Any religious group not established by Christ is of the world regardless of what they say or claim.
    - a. Why? Because they not are doing what they do by the authority of Christ.
    - b. They are following the wisdom of men instead of the wisdom of God.
- B. The wisdom of men is totally incompatible with the wisdom of God.
1. Listen to what God tells us about it in the book of 1 CORINTHIANS.
  2. 1 CORINTHIANS 1:20-21 “Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”
  3. 1 CORINTHIANS 2:5 “That your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.”
  4. We cannot listen to men and to God at the same time. It is one or the other.
  5. If we begin acting like the religious world around us, that means we are listening to wisdom of men instead of the wisdom of God.
- C. We can be friends of the world or we can be friends of God, but we cannot be both.
1. JAMES 4:4 “You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”
  2. Please do not misunderstand what is being said here. James is not saying we can't have personal friends who are not Christians.
  3. He is talking about letting our desire to be like the world keep us from obeying God and doing what God says we must do.
  4. The Lord's church and the worldly churches around us are totally incompatible with each other. We must not compromise with them in any way.
- IV. What does God expect of us concerning our relationship with the world?
- A. God gives us some very clear, very distinct commands concerning the relationship His people are to have with the world.
1. We are not to love the world.
    - a. 1 JOHN 2:15-17 “Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world,

the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.”

- b. Live in the world, share God's word in the world, care for lost souls in the world, but we are not to love this world. He points out that this includes the "things" of the world, which will include false religions.
2. We are not to look like the world.
    - a. ROMANS 12:2 “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”
    - b. The point here is that "being conformed to the world" is exactly opposite of proving what the will of God is.
    - c. In other words, we either conform to the world OR we conform to the will of God! We cannot do both.
  3. We are not to even be tainted by the world.
    - a. JAMES 1:27 “This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.”
    - b. If we truly want to be pure and undefiled before God, we must not have anything to do with the world, including the religions of the world.
- B. The whole point is this: compromise to any degree with those of the world will condemn us before God.
1. Here is where most people really get upset and say that they are not talking about "false" religions. They just want to be like their neighbors who love God and believe in Jesus.
  2. We must understand that believing in both God and Jesus will not make one right with God.
  3. In JOHN 12:42 we read of Jewish rulers who believed in Jesus but refused to confess Him out of fear of the Pharisees.
  4. Any religion that does not fully, wholly obey Christ is a false religion.
    - a. Why? Because if they are not obeying Him fully, they are refusing to allow Jesus to be the head of the church.
    - b. If Jesus is not the head, it is not His church.
  5. The greatest example for this is given us by the Lord Himself in MATT. 7:21-23.
    - a. MATTHEW 7:21-23 “Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?

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And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS."

6. Five questions concerning the people described in verse 22.
    - a. Are these good people?
    - b. Are these religious people?
    - c. Do they believe in Jesus?
    - d. Are they doing "good" things?
    - e. To whom are they giving the credit for what they are doing? Jesus!
  7. Yet, they are condemned eternally! Why? The answer is in verse 21. They were not doing these things the WAY God said do them. They were not doing them according to God's will.
- C. Compromise with the world can occur right inside the church itself.
1. We see congregations compromising with the denominational world by having joint worship services with them, by participating in ministerial alliances, by inviting denominational preachers to speak for special occasions, etc.
    - a. When we do these things we are telling the world that we are in agreement with them.
    - b. AMOS 3:3 "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (KJV)
    - c. We give the impression that even though we may disagree with some of their doctrine, we believe they are still OK with God.
    - d. EPHESIANS 5:11 "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."
  2. We do not have to join ourselves with a false religion or participate with false religions to compromise with them.
  3. All we have to do is fail to teach the whole doctrine of Christ because we don't want to offend these other religions.
  4. Any change, alteration, or twisting of God's word is compromise and will condemn one eternally.
  5. The apostle Paul wrote the church in Galatia and was concerned because they had deserted Christ for a different gospel (GAL. 1:6).
    - a. To just read here one automatically thinks, "Wow, they had left Christ. They were teaching something entirely wrong, some off the wall false doctrine."
    - b. But if you continue reading, you will really get a wakeup call in the very next verse. These people were not teaching some totally different doctrine – they had simply "distorted" the gospel.
    - c. It still sounded essentially the same, looked essentially the same, but they had just twisted it a little to fit what they wanted it to say.



- d. Apparently from what Paul says in verse 10, they did so to compromise with and to gain the approval of men.
- 6. Hey, as long as they teach the truth in general, teach the main points of the gospel, what difference does just a little change here or there make?
- 7. I will let Paul answer that for us.
  - a. GALATIANS 1:8 "But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed."
  - b. Anyone who changes the truth of God's word one iota will pay for it eternally!
- D. We must choose – please God or please men. We cannot be like the world and be pleasing to God.
  - 1. GALATIANS 1:10 "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ."
  - 2. It is our choice. We choose. We can please our family, please our best friend, please some organization, OR we can simply please God!

## CONCLUSION

- A. Can the church "out worldly" the world? Absolutely!
- B. Can the church "out worldly" the world and still be the Lord's church? Absolutely Not!
- C. What are we to do with the world?
  - 1. We are not to be conformed to it.
  - 2. We are not to love it.
  - 3. We are not to participate in it or with it.
- D. But, we are also to try to save the world.
  - 1. We must love those who are participants in false worship of any kind.
  - 2. We must be willing to talk, to study, and to share God's word with them at any and every opportunity.
  - 3. We must follow the example of our Savior – seek and save the lost.
  - 4. Brethren, if we truly believe we have the truth, then we must do everything within our power to share it with others.
- E. Our single most important goal from any direction ought to be just one thing.
  - 1. Do what is right with God, period!
  - 2. To do this, we must accept Him at His word.
- F. Brethren, it is my prayer that we will all learn God's word, apply it to our own personal lives and then share it with everyone we possibly can.

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# Trends Toward Mergers & Pluralism

Scott Elliott



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## INTRODUCTION

- A. The idea of mergers and pluralism begins with a focus outside the local congregation onto something else. It will be beneficial to examine this focus to see whether or not it is healthy for the local congregation.
- B. Mergers and pluralism are not something common to all places and time. There are things within our culture that allow for mergers and pluralism to not only exist, but to be popular. We need to identify these cultural influences to understand why mergers and pluralism are popular. I do not pretend to know and understand all of the elements behind a congregation's desire to look outward, but I believe there are certain things within our culture that feed this desire. As already stated, this desire is not present in all cultures and times, so there must be things within a culture that foster the desire to look outward.

## BODY

- I. Communication
  - A. This encompasses many things. Most other cultures did not worry about mergers because they did not communicate with many people outside their town. If all we know is what goes on in a 5 mile radius around our church building, then we are not going to have much desire to look outward. We live in a day and age where not only do we know and hear about things near us, but we hear about things that take place half-way around the world. We are flooded with news and information on a regular basis. This is not the cause of mergers and pluralism, but it definitely presents a breeding ground.
  - B. We must also think of mergers and pluralism outside the realm of religion. Congregations are not only influenced by other religious bodies, but they are also influenced by entertainment, politics, fashion, and all kinds of other things.

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Communication, like many things we find in the world, can be used for good or evil, and we must decide how we plan on using it.

## II. Focus on Others

- A. Our country has an unhealthy focus on others. We constantly want to know what our favorite actor, athlete, TV personality, etc. is doing or saying. We are always connected, so we get instant updates on what is going on.
- B. Congregations can get caught up in this mentality as well. They can have fixations on congregations who they believe are doing wrong, or they can obsess over religious bodies who they believe can do nothing wrong. With either extreme the result is the same. Congregations spend more time focusing on outsiders than what is happening with their own members.

## III. Competitiveness

- A. Perhaps the greatest motivating factor behind mergers and pluralism is the drive to be the best. Americans are fixated with winning and being the best. This mentality has produced many great things for this country, but it can also lead to ruin. We foster the competitive drive in the church with our focus on numbers. We focus on how many are in attendance, how many baptisms, how many restorations, how many in VBS, etc. Although it is good that people are hearing and responding to the gospel, this may not be the best way to measure a congregation's success.
- B. I believe there is an overemphasis on numbers and a lack of emphasis on spiritual formation and growth. If a church has good numbers, but is not growing spiritually, does God consider this a success? If a church has a lot of baptisms, but does not teach or even keep these members is God pleased with this? I believe our competitive nature has sometimes caused us to focus on the wrong areas, and therefore led us to make poor decisions.

## IV. A Proper Merger

- A. One might assume after reading my thoughts above that I am against mergers. That is not so. I was a part of a church merger not long ago. I encouraged this merger, and I still support it to this day.
- B. I believe we merged for the right reasons.
  - 1. We did not merge out of desperation. We did not merge because it was the popular thing to do. We did not merge to become the biggest church in town.
  - 2. We merged because God does not want division in His church (JOHN 17:20-24). We merged because we were trying to be good stewards of God's money (If we were not paying utilities on two buildings, then we could support more mission efforts.).

We merged so we could become better evangelists (We found that having two congregations in one town was a barrier to evangelism.).

### **CONCLUSION**

- A. Where should we go from here? In the few years I have been in ministry, I have witnessed an unhealthy focus on others from the right and the left. Our ultimate concern as leaders and members of a congregation should be to that congregation. Our next concern should be reaching people in our community. If we will focus all of our efforts on our congregation and our community, I believe we will have little time left over.
- B. Let us commit ourselves to our congregations and our communities, and use the gifts God has given us wisely.



# Do “the Times” Change Worship?

Jim Foster



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## INTRODUCTION

- A. I appreciate the invitation and the opportunity to speak on this 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies Lectureship.
- B. Some very timely subjects have been selected.
  - 1. Lessons that are greatly needed in today’s liberal atmosphere.
- C. The chosen theme for the lectures this year is rather interesting.
  - 1. This is the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Lectureship, and it is on the 21<sup>st</sup> century church.
  - 2. The theme of the lectures in the year 2005 was 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church.
  - 3. A lot of changes have taken place in the worship services of the church between those of the 1<sup>st</sup> century and the services of the 21<sup>st</sup> century church that we know today.
    - a. Singing during the Lord’s supper
    - b. Team song leaders (with both men and women)
    - c. Instrumental music
    - d. Choirs
    - e. Hand clapping
    - f. Entertainment of all kinds has corrupted the worship of today.
- D. Who are we trying to please, God or man?
  - 1. Example: (Article taken from *Christianity: Then and Now* – John Waddey, editor, dated January 1, 2010, page 3).

### *Come Let Us Play Church*

The dawning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century brought a destructive deformation to many denominational churches. Convinced that this generation will not hear nor accept the gospel of Christ, numerous preachers have been willing to do virtually

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anything to attract and keep members for their church. Below are three examples I came across today.

- First Lutheran Church in Temple, Texas will host a “Polka Worship” Sunday, September 16th. A huge banner posted before their meeting house announces this “exciting event.”
- Pastor Cole Phillips of the Connection Church in Kyle, Texas just finished a series on “This Summer’s Hit Movies.” He is now beginning a series on “The Office: Work Doesn’t Have to Suck.”
- Some churches are now offering the “Faith in Fitness Project” for their members, which is Yoga for Christian worship. The ad has two lovely young women in a candlelit chapel, dressed in tights, with abs displayed. They called it Christ/Yoga. “Two work outs in one.” They coo, “Worship Jesus while you work out!”

Throughout the nation, such foolishness is being offered in many churches that a few years ago were considered “Evangelical” i.e. conservative, Bible believing bodies. If they attract thousands, what have the people found? It certainly bears no resemblance to the gospel of Christ which is God’s power to salvation (Rom. 1:16). Those whom we identify as “Change Agents” are eager to try anything that the denominational leaders have found that attracts people. We are not surprised to learn that some of them are following the lead of these shameless teachers. For example:

On October 4th 2009, Rick Atchley, the senior minister of the Richland Hills church of Fort Worth, Texas, offered a similar program for his congregation. After noting that the father of the Prodigal Son held a feast with music and dancing, the preacher had the band to power up and present an earsplitting, fast-paced ditty. He called all the children to come and dance before the congregation. All the attendees were given party whistles to blow and were encouraged to do so as worship to the Father. He announced that they were having a feast as the climax of their service. (I find it hard to refer to this congregation as a church of Christ, although it once was.) **JHW**

- E. The topic that has been assigned me to speak on this year is, “Do ‘The Times’ Change the Worship in the Church of Christ?”
- F. To this I would add that I am not against change. I like change and even look forward to more changes. (God approved changes though.)

### **BODY**

- I. There Is Need Today For a Great Revival, (Change).
  - A. One of Webster’s definitions for the word “revive” is, “To bring back to life.”



- B. Stirring oneself up into an emotional, religious frenzy is not the kind of revival I am talking about.
- C. The act of spiritual revival, like our salvation, has two parts – God’s part and man’s part.
  - 1. EPHESIANS 2:8-10 “For by grace have you been saved (*God’s part*) through faith. (*Man’s part*)”
- D. Revive is a Biblical word.
  - 1. PSA. 85:6 “Wilt Thou not Thyself revive us again, that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?” (NASV)
  - 2. We have long avoided using the word “revival,” probably because of the denominational groups who have their “Holy Ghost” revivals in which all types of unscriptural things are done, such as claiming it is possible to:
    - a. Perform miracles
    - b. Speak in tongues
    - c. Cast out demons
    - d. Use women preachers, etc.
  - 3. We call our meetings “Gospel Meetings,” which is OK. They are meetings in which the gospel is preached.
  - 4. It would be alright to call such a meeting a “revival,” however, if it is a Biblical revival in which God does His part (the reviving) and man does his part (believing).
  - 5. God does His part – that of reviving – by His word.
    - a. JOHN 6:63
  - 6. Man does his part by obeying that word.
    - a. HEBREWS 5:8-9; JAMES 1:21
  - 7. We need a world-wide revival today, not just a local meeting.
- E. We must rekindle that heart-felt desire to know God and to do His will and thus win His approval.
  - 1. Only such a rededication can stem the tide of immorality, degradation, and shame. This is the only true course, and this course alone can give mankind any real hope.
  - 2. This world is in a shameful mess, and it is affecting the church.
    - a. Fornication, drunkenness, murder, immorality, lewdness, etc., are no longer seen or heard of only in the world. There is a crying need for a religious revival and a rededication to God and His word.
    - b. We need to make some changes. A spiritual change (revival) must take place and this can only be accomplished by the skillful use of the word of God which is the “sword of the Spirit.” (EPH. 6:17) This special “scalpel” is the sharpest tool on earth, because it is able to cut open the spiritual heart of man. No physical sword can go any deeper than the fleshly heart, thus making the word of God “... sharper than any two-edged sword.” This is the only way we can reach the

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hearts of men and bring about true repentance. (ECCLESIASTES 12:13; ACTS 16:30-31)

- c. We need a revival of faith and an implicit trust in the word of God. A “thus saith the Lord” must be our authority.
- d. The inspired scriptures must be our standard. (2 TIM. 2:15; 2 JOHN 9-10; 2 TIM. 3:16-17)
- e. All pretenders and false teachers must be stopped with the principle set forth by God’s prophet of old. ISA. 8:20 “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”
- f. We must re-examine and strengthen our religious convictions. 1 PET. 3:15 “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer (*apologia – make a defense*) to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you, in meekness and fear.”

## II. Changes Can Be Good

A. We are living in a changing world.

- 1. New words and phrases added to our vocabulary.
  - a. We now hear people say things like, “I’ll have to google it up.” Meaning they will search the internet with a “search engine” called “Google.”
- 2. The meanings of old words in our vocabulary have been changed.
  - a. Mouse
  - b. Mouse pad
  - c. Gay
  - d. Blackberry, etc.
- 3. Means of communication, travel, etc.
  - a. Cell phones
  - b. E-mail
  - c. ATVs, SUVs, 4WDs, Monorails – not just the usual planes, trains, and automobiles.

## III. Not All Changes Are Good

A. The gentiles made changes in their worship that were not good.

- 1. ROMANS 1:21-32
  - a. Notice v. 23 “...changed the glory of God...”
  - b. Notice v. 25 “...changed the truth into a lie...”
  - c. Notice v. 26 “...changed the natural use...”
  - d. Notice v. 32, the conclusion brought about because of these changes.

B. Many such changes are brought about because the people don’t take God seriously.

1. Adam and Eve – eating the fruit. (GEN. 3:3,6)
  2. Moses – striking the rock. (NUMBERS 20:8, 11)
  3. Achan – hid the gold, silver, and a “goodly Babylonish garment.” (JOSHUA 6:18-19; 7:1,20,21)
  4. Commanded to “do no work on the Sabbath ...” – gathered sticks (EXODUS 12:16; NUMBERS 15:32, 35)
  5. Commanded to never gather more than the allotted portion of manna and to keep none till the next morning except on the sixth day, they were to gather a double amount because there would be none on the Sabbath – nevertheless, some disobeyed. (EXODUS 16:4-31)
  6. The young prophet who listened to the old prophet instead of God. (1 KINGS 13:1-30)
  7. Uzzah – touched the ark to steady it, which thing the Lord had commanded not to do. (NUMBERS 4:5-6, 15; 2 SAMUEL 6:6-7)
- C. God is the only One who has the right to make changes in how He is worshipped.
1. He has changed the law. (HEBREWS 8:7-8)
  2. He has changed the priesthood. (HEBREWS 7:12-24)
  3. He has changed the place of worship. (JOHN 4:21, 23-24; EPHESIANS 3:21)
  4. He has changed the sacrifices. (HEBREWS 10:4-14)
  5. He has changed the kingdom. (DANIEL 2:44)
- D. Man has no right to change any of God’s laws.
1. God has given man His final and complete revelation of truth.
    - a. (HEBREWS 1:1-2; 2:1-4)
  2. Some did try to change and some will continue to try to change God’s commands.
    - a. (2 PETER 2:1-9)

#### IV. The Importance of Truth in Religion

- A. There is a great indifference toward truth today.
1. “It matters not what you believe.”
  2. “All is right as long as you are sincere.” They teach that truth is “relative.”
  3. The truth is not like a rubber band – it can’t be stretched.
    - a. Stretched truth becomes a lie.
    - b. Beware even of a half truth – you may have the wrong half. Paul and Peter both warned that those who were “unlearned and unstable” would “wrest,” or in other words twist, the scriptures. (2 PETER 3:16)
- B. Jesus teaches us the importance of truth.
1. Christ came to witness the truth. (JOHN 18:36-38)
  2. The truth was important enough to cause the Son of God to leave the glory of heaven. (JOHN 17:5)

## Do “the Times” Change Worship?

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- a. He humbled Himself as a man.
    - b. He suffered from scoffers and mockers.
    - c. He suffered the terrible pain and agony of the cross.
  - 3. It cost the Son of God all this and more, so it must have been very important to Him.
    - a. It should be very important to us in our worship to Him. (JOHN 4:23-24; 1 PETER 1:21)
- V. Do the Times In Which We Live Give Us the Right To Change the Worship Offered To God?
- A. Jesus says, “... the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and TRUTH: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a spirit and they that worship Him MUST worship Him in spirit and in TRUTH.” (*Emphasis mine*)
  - B. When the early church was established and the Holy Spirit came, He guided the apostles into “all truth.” (JOHN 16:13)
  - C. The early church worshipped God in truth.
    - 1. According to the revealed word of God. (JOHN 17:17)
    - 2. What they did in their worship was according to truth (the word of God), and they were pleasing to God. (ACTS 2:46-47)
  - D. Truth never changes
    - 1. If a thing was true yesterday – it will be true today.
  - E. God’s word is truth and lives forever.
    - 1. “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” (1 PETER 1:23)
    - 2. “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” (MATTHEW 24:35)
  - F. The early church had five items of worship – these were according to truth and pleasing to God.
    - 1. Since truth never changes, if we do the same things, then we too will be pleasing to God.
      - a. We don’t ever read of the early church trying to add to that truth: dancing, blowing whistles, instrumental music, Lord’s Supper on Saturday night, pig kissing, pie throwing, etc.
  - G. If our worship is to be pleasing to God, then it must be patterned after the 1<sup>st</sup> century church. The word of truth reveals to us that they had five items of worship – no more and no less.
    - 1. Preaching / teaching
      - a. Not just any kind, but “gospel” preaching (1 COR. 2:2)
      - b. The message of the cross (1 COR. 1:18,21)
      - c. Preaching the word (ACTS 8:4)

- d. To preach the word is to preach Christ (ACTS 8:5)
- e. To preach Christ is to preach the things concerning the kingdom of God (ACTS 8:12) and includes baptism.
- f. The preaching done by the church is to make known the whole counsel of God and His wisdom. (ACTS 20:26-27; EPH. 5:19; COL. 3:16)
- 2. Singing
  - a. Not one scripture in the New Testament ever says to sing and play.
  - b. Instrumental music was added to Christian worship by man long after the 1<sup>st</sup> century.
  - c. EPH. 5:19; COL. 3:16
- 3. The Lord's Supper
  - a. On the right day (ACTS 20:7)
  - b. With the proper elements (1 COR. 11:23-25)
  - c. For the right purpose (1 COR. 11:26-29)
- 4. Giving
  - a. On the right day (1 COR. 16:1-2)
  - b. With the right attitude – cheerful heart, not grudging. (2 COR. 9:7)
  - c. The right amount - as prospered and purposed. Free-will giving, not tithing, which many denominations have added from the Old Testament to the New Testament worship in their churches. (1 COR. 16:2, 2 COR. 9:6-7) In this instance, as in many others, they are using the Bible, but they are not "... handling accurately the word of truth." (2 TIM. 2:15) NASV
- 5. Prayer
  - a. To the right person - the Father in heaven. (MATT. 6:9)
  - b. In the right name – Jesus. (JOHN 16:23-24)
  - c. By faith. (MARK 11:22-24)
  - d. According to God's will. Not to be consumed on our own lusts. (JAMES 4:3)

## CONCLUSION

Do "the times," (or era) in which we live, change the way worship is to be offered to God?

- A. The church is to bring glory to God. (EPH. 3:21)
  - 1. There is only one church, hence only one place we can glorify God. (EPH. 1: 22-23; EPH. 4:4)
  - 2. Our worship, in order to be pleasing to God, must be offered properly.
    - a. "... in spirit and in truth." (JOHN 4:24)
- B. We must never assume anything is alright just because we like it.

## Do “the Times” Change Worship?

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- a. “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD ...” (ISA 55:8-9)
  - b. Remember Nadab and Abihu? (LEVITICUS 10:1-2)
- C. Thus, the answer to the question above is, the times in which we live do not give us the right to change any of God’s teaching by adding to or subtracting from those things which God has clearly revealed in His word.
  - 1. An altered truth is not truth.
    - a. “For I am the LORD, I change not: ...” (MALACHI 3:6)
- D. God has protected His word.
  - 1. In His infinite foreknowledge, God saw that men would try to change His word, thus, just as He protected the entrance to the garden of Eden by a flaming sword, in like manner He has set sentinels, “armed guards” so to speak, throughout the Bible warning of dire consequences to anyone who would add to or take away from His word.
    - a. In the beginning. (DEUTERONOMY 4:2; 12:32)
    - b. In the middle. (PROVERBS 30:6; REV. 21:8)
    - c. At the end. (REV. 22:18-19)
- E. God Himself will bring about changes
  - 1. I do, however, look forward to some great changes that God will bring to pass.
    - a. Our bodies will be changed. (PHIL. 3:21; 1 COR. 15:51-52)
    - b. The LORD has said, “... Behold, I make all things new ...” (REV. 21:5)

# New Age Religions & Paganism

Chris Stinnett



Chris has received a Bachelor's Degree from Oklahoma Christian and a Master's Degree from Harding Graduate School. He has preached twenty-two years, doing local work in Missouri, Michigan, and Oklahoma. He and his wife, Connie, have worked with the church of Christ in Seminole, OK for the last twelve years. Chris has been published in *Christian Chronicle*, *21<sup>st</sup> Century Christian*, *Gospel Advocate*, *Christian Bible Teacher*, and *Leadership Journal*. He has also taught Bible survey courses for Seminole State College.

## INTRODUCTION

- A. A woman in northern California "protected" herself from car collisions with deer. She got into her car and chanted: "Three times around, three times about; A world within, a world without." Then she said, "I think 'blue' and send a psychic warning to the deer that I'm coming." She further stated, "It works! My friend has hit three deer this year alone and I've never hit one at all!"
- B. This woman is guilty of faulty logic (this happened after this; therefore, it happened because of this), but she is definitely a New Age devotee. I was asked to speak about New Age religions and the rise of paganism, which surprised me somewhat because they are not very similar ideas. Also, I had thought that New Age thinking was fairly outmoded and laughed off. Alas, that is not the case; it is common enough that the media no longer report this kind of spiritual delusion.
- C. Let's start by understanding what we're discussing.
  - 1. New Age thinking involves a few common ideas: a) the Self is the true reality and it is evolving and transforming into something exciting and quite different from what we are now, b) the Cosmos is both material (our visible world) and immaterial (an invisible "energy" component), c) cosmic consciousness is independent of current ideas of space, time and morality, d) death is not the end of existence, so there is no fear of what is to come, and e) separate consciousnesses are often encountered through occult means (Ouija boards, séances, "channeling," magic spells and incantations, etc.).
  - 2. Paganism also involves a few common ideas: a) there are many gods and/or goddesses who inhabit an eternal universe, b) mankind is an immortal spirit, c) morality is always relative and local (this might not be right in another place or time), and d) the gods may be induced to involve themselves in human affairs.

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- D. It should be immediately clear that these are vastly different thought systems. Paganism expects personal spirits, New Age calls for self to be god; Paganism presumes an eternal and fixed order, New Age expects spiritual “upward mobility.” What they have in common is: a belief in immortality, extreme self-interest, exemption from morality (so we can act as we think proper), and mechanisms to manipulate the spiritual realm to serve personal interests.
- E. In the face of the most basic Christian teaching, how is it possible that these ideas have bubbled to the surface again? The answer is found in an ancient lament in Hosea 4:6—“my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”
- F. Our first impulse is to ask, “How shall the church meet the challenge of these destructive religious ideas?” After all, 2 CORINTHIANS 10:3-5 reminds us that we are in a conflict of ideas and that we must approach it as a conflict. But I think a more correct perspective will be gained by remembering that Christianity has always challenged false religious ideas. We are not challenged; we are the challengers to this—and all other—spiritual delusions.
- G. Because of my own background, I tend to look at just about every religious problem with an eye toward the past: how did early Christians tackle these challenges? And one of the best examples of early Christian assaults against paganism is found in ACTS 17:16-34 in Paul’s address to the Athenian philosophers.
- H. The city of Athens was the best-educated city in the ancient world: about 70% of the population was literate, it had a long tradition of philosophy (modern “science and arts” categories), it had a religious background that was accepted by nearly all societies it contacted, it was wealthy enough to support an educator class, and people actually expected to put into practice progressive ideas that were superior to earlier norms. Into this blend, Paul brought the gospel of Jesus Christ. In so doing, he illustrated how we can expose the bankruptcy of pagan (and New Age) ideas in the minds of confused people.

## BODY

**Subject Sentence: The Christian faith is the challenge to other religious ideas.**

- I. By understanding that people are spiritually interested—ACTS 17:22-23.
  - A. Paul understood the inborn drive we have for respect and worship.
    - 1. He called the Athenians, “superstitious,” meaning “personally engaged in religious thinking and pious in observances.” This is different from the idea of “religious” in the ancient world since that meant, “someone who participates in the civic rituals, whether he believes it or not.”



2. He must have known that many educated people rejected the pantheon of gods in favor of a single, all-powerful god—for all that He remained obscure to them (this is probably not the background of the “unknown god”; that simply referred to some god that might be otherwise overlooked in their piety). Plato, following Socrates’ lead, had dismissed the concept of the ancient rustic gods in favor of a single God, even though he thought the world populated by myriad demons or demigods.
  3. He also understood that the Athenian conception of spirituality was bound up with civic pride, patriotism, cultural mores, and social heritage. Any challenge to “the gods” was an attack on Athens, itself, and all that the dimly remembered Age of Pericles had come to symbolize in their minds.
- B. Today there is great interest in “spiritual things.”
1. Most Americans have little or no faith in “science” to solve problems of human behavior and human socialization.
  2. They are dimly aware that there is (or might be) some supernatural component to the universe. However, they are completely at sea in discovering anything reliable about it. They lack knowledge of the most basic ideas about God. There is a “famine in the land” (Amos 8:11-12). Consequently they are vulnerable to every false teaching and speculation to be found.
  3. Their conception of “Christianity” is mostly about cultural forms like Christmas and social mores—especially “tolerance,” which they consider the most divine of virtues.
- C. We have the satisfaction of their interest!
1. They want to know a word from God—to them, an unknown God—and we have that word!
  2. They think they know about Christianity, but they know nothing of the reality of our faith. An interesting study a couple of decades ago showed that American children ranked 29th among 40 industrialized nations in math skills, but #1 in self-confidence about their math ability! I think something like that is true of American Bible knowledge, too. “Often in error but never in doubt!”
  3. A look at movies like “2012,” or the forthcoming “Clash of the Titans” shows that people are interested in a universe larger and more complex than our science labs proclaim. There is every reason to think that people will listen to the gospel if it is presented to them.

**Transition: We have to recognize that people are interested in spiritual things. That’s why they listen to pagan and New Age ideas. But we can help them escape the confusion ...**

- II. By offering knowledge of the truth—Acts 17:24-28.
  - A. Paul announced to the Athenians the truth.

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1. Much of what they “knew” about the gods was false speculation and could not be logically sustained against the accepted truths of their own philosophy.
  2. The topic of nationalities and the boundaries of peoples was a very serious debate of the time. The extent of conquest by the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans left open the question of the proper influence of various nations.
  3. He used quotations by their own poets (Epimenides and Aratus in quotations known by every Athenian schoolboy—on a par with phrases from our “Pledge of Allegiance”) to point out the central truth that God exists and that He gives all blessings to human beings.
- B. Today, there is a spirit of skepticism and suspicion regarding “truth.”
1. Many people are deeply hostile to those who offer an exclusive truth because they believe there are actually many facets of truth, all of which are equally valid. This is false and illogical on its face (it implies a full knowledge of full truth), but myriad unhappy manipulations by authorities have left a distaste for “truth” among many Americans.
  2. Educated Americans have been carefully trained by our educational institutions (especially at the university level) to reject “truth” in favor of “research.” As Dallas Willard wrote, “The result is that the accepted institutions of knowledge today have nothing to say—and certainly no knowledge to offer—with reference to the primary questions of life, ...” (*Knowing Christ Today*, New York: HarperOne, 2009, p. 57).
  3. Still, hearers resonate with a claim of moral truth—there is right that is always right and wrong that is always wrong. One man heard me preach this and later commented, “I’ve always believed that; nobody ever told me that.”
  4. Much of what is called “relativism” is just an evasion of responsibility for determining what is actually true. And Paul spoke of such people in 2 TIMOTHY 3:7.
- C. Regardless of skepticism or suspicion, truth is still true.
1. Some truths are accepted by all people, and they do not apologize for holding these to be factual. In addition, some ideas are actually unsubstantiated, yet accepted as if they were unassailable truth (the sources of global temperature increases, for example). And, of course, some truths are dismissed as “interpretations,” or presumed to be exposed as fraud even though they are demonstrably true (the growth of “conspiracy theories” shows how this takes place).
  2. As Mark Twain put it, “Facts are stubborn things,” and we have genuine facts and actual knowledge as a result of the revelation of Jesus Christ. These things are true, and our confidence in this truth both attracts and repels current hearers.
  3. Still, through Jesus Christ we have the answers to the big questions of life: What is reality? Who is blessed? Who is a truly good person? How can I become a truly good

person? We have this knowledge by revelation, not discovery or imagination (1 CORINTHIANS 4:7 reminds us that we are not praiseworthy in our knowledge).

**Transition: The world is gnawing on false teachings because it is starving for knowledge of the truth. This is truth we have from God. And we can give people confidence in it ...**

III. By backing up our claims to truth—Acts 17:29-31.

A. Paul pointed out the emptiness of Greek religion.

1. Apparently, Paul routinely pointed out the bankruptcy of seeking to serve man-made gods. He made this clear in Lystra (ACTS 14) and here in Athens, and this was the primary cause of the riot in Ephesus (ACTS 19:23-29).
2. However, this was stated earlier by Greek philosophers. When Plato was questioned by one of his students about the Greek myths, he replied to the effect that childish stories have their uses, implying a rejection of pagan stories.
3. All the pagan myths were based on unrecoverable tradition and unverifiable stories. There were no external reasons that could be provided.

B. Today we hear other religious claims that have no evidence.

1. The claims of New Age devotees have no evidence that can be offered to demonstrate that they are in contact with a reality different from what is observed. When confronted, they take refuge in their own experiences.
2. The claims of pagan devotees are rooted in “ancient tradition.” In actuality, most ancient pagan tradition is utterly lost and can never be recovered. For example, the Druids were exterminated by the Romans and all their myths and rituals were lost. Those who claim to be Druids today are making up their own ideas.
3. The ancient traditions that can be restated are manifestly and obviously false. The claims of Native Americans that their ancestors “emerged from a hole in the earth” or that the rains are due to the storm gods in the western mountains are clearly based on a desire to balance the order of natural cycles with the apparent randomness of occasional events.

C. We must know the central truths of our faith.

1. The gospel message is rooted in historical reality. In an actual time, in an actual place, with competent witnesses and hostile critics, Jesus of Nazareth taught a spiritual and ethical system that was radically different from other religious ideas of the day. That teaching has been preserved in written form, unchanged for 2,000 years.
2. Jesus is definitely competent to expound on spiritual truths. He is evidently Divine in nature. He performed miracles (admitted by all, even His enemies), He fulfilled all predictions about the coming Messiah that were made hundreds of years in advance, and He rose from the dead on the third day after His judicial murder.

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3. In every place where we can test the truth of Biblical revelation, it is shown to be reliable and accurate. This gives us great confidence in its truthfulness in areas that we cannot test: the future resurrection of the righteous and unrighteous with an attendant judgment and an eternal reward.

**Transition: In contrast to the speculations and wishful thinking of New Age or pagan devotees, we offer truth and evidence to support it. We can challenge these ideas ...**

IV. By preparing for interaction with these ideas—ACTS 17:32-34.

A. Paul experienced three responses to his message:

1. He experienced rejection. Some were unable to hear a message of resurrection from the dead—it was obviously impossible and fit with nothing of their former understanding.
2. He experienced interest. Some were willing to hear more on the subject—the foreign nature of the material could not disguise the hope within it.
3. He experienced acceptance and obedience. Some resonated with the truth claims and the moral knowledge found in the gospel message and gave their lives to Jesus.

B. We will get the same responses today from New Age and pagan devotees:

1. Some will reject the gospel. This does not fit their desires for power and manipulation of forces greater than themselves. In addition, the high level of morality called for by Christ is not congenial to their desires. Typically they will dismiss the faith as something already examined and found wanting by them.
2. Some will be interested to hear more. They are genuinely interested in spiritual things and may hear spiritual truth within the gospel that they have never experienced before. They may never have understood that the gospel is rooted in verifiable, historical reality.
3. Some will hear and obey. They will still have a great deal to learn and many wrong beliefs to overcome, but the sheer joy and hope of the gospel message is truly nourishment to souls in famine.

C. We must remember that we are the challengers to the false teachings.

1. We must always approach people with gentleness and respect (1 PETER 3:15-16) and show our respect by politely listening to their ideas and objections while presenting the gospel message to them.
2. We must be ready to marshal our evidence and to understand thoroughly our faith in order to explain it with simplicity.
3. We must be respectful of God's determination to give every human being free choice to obey or disobey. If a person rejects the message of the gospel, we must accept that God treats him or her as an adult—and we must, also.

## CONCLUSION

- A. If we are seeing an increase in New Age or pagan ideas and practices, it's because we have not successfully challenged this thinking. A great many people do not know that there is an alternative to this unsubstantiated and deadly "wishful thinking."
- B. We should not be surprised to discover that many of our neighbors think they know all about the Christian faith that they have rejected, while, in fact, they know very little that could be described as Biblical truth and orthodox Christian faith.
- C. Much of the world lives in a "low-grade misery" that Jesus came to redeem and relieve. It is the responsibility of the church to proclaim that message of freedom that results in true growth and the realization of human potential.



# Twenty Centuries of Human Tradition

Marion R. Fox



Marion is a native of Western Oklahoma. He and his wife, Cynthia, have three children. Marion studied at the Elk City School of Preaching. In his secular studies, he received a Masters Degree in Science and a Doctorate in Education. He has served as the director of the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies for nineteen years. He is a prolific writer, having authored several books and outline books, including *A Study of the Biblical Flood*, *The Work of the Holy Spirit (Vol. 1 & 2)*, *The Role of Women (Vol. 1 & 2)*, and *The Great Commission*.

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- I. Acceptance of traditions as authoritative, and on par with the Scriptures.
    - A. Many, in the early church, adopted the idea that the apostles passed teachings on to the church in oral form and did not write down all the things that God wanted the church to do.
      1. Irenaeus<sup>1</sup> and Tertullian<sup>2</sup> both held that the Scriptures could only be properly interpreted in light of tradition.
      2. Irenaeus discusses the need for tradition<sup>3</sup>.
      3. Cyprian<sup>4</sup> insisted that tradition must be measured by the Scriptures.
      4. The Alexandrian school claimed to have knowledge of a secret tradition that had secretly been handed down by the apostles, by word of mouth.
      5. Augustine<sup>5</sup> asserted that the Scriptures were the purest source of truth.
      6. Gregory the Great<sup>6</sup> held that the four general councils of the church had equal authority with the Scriptures.
    - B. The problem was that they failed to recognize the progressive nature of the revelation of the will of God.
      1. The things the apostles wrote were the commandment of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37).
      2. When we read what Paul wrote we can understand what he knew about the will of God (EPH. 3:3-4).
      3. Another fallacy of the system is in the fact that their doctrine and practice constantly changed. If the church had the truth in its practice it should have constantly practiced the same things and taught the same doctrines.

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<sup>1</sup> Iren. iii. 4 (AD 130-200)

<sup>2</sup> Tertul. Paerscr. c. 20 (AD 155-223)

<sup>3</sup> Irenaeus, i. 10, ii. 35

<sup>4</sup> Cyprian Ep. 74 (AD 195-268)

<sup>5</sup> Aug. Ep. 137, De Doct. Christ. ii. 42 (AD 354-430)

<sup>6</sup> Lib. i. Ep. 25, and Lib. iii. Ep. 10 (AD 590-604)

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- a. I appeal to the “church fathers” to prove that their claim to follow tradition is not true. What they teach, today, is different than what was taught in the second and third centuries.
- b. It follows that they do not follow the traditions of the second century church.

## II. The Scriptural teaching on the subject of tradition.

- A. The traditions of men are not a safe guide in service to God (MT. 15:1-20; MK. 7:1-23).
  1. The traditions of men cause some to wrongfully accuse others of sin (MT. 15:1-2; MK. 7:1-5).
  2. The traditions of men led some persons to sin (MT. 15:3).
  3. The traditions of men have made void the word of God (MT. 15:4-6; MK. 7:10-13).
  4. The traditions of men have caused some to engage in vain worship (MT. 15:8-9; MK. 7:6-7).
  5. The traditions of men have made spoil (“lead them astray or take them captive.” Thayer, p. 594 [COL. 2:8]).
  6. Most religious groups elevate their church traditions above the Scriptures.
- B. The traditions of the apostles were first handed down by word of mouth and then written in the New Testament.
  1. Paul taught by word and epistle the traditions of God (2 THESS. 2:15).
  2. Paul said to hold fast the traditions he had taught (1 COR. 11:2).
- C. The Scriptures claim to be the total revelation of the will of God.
  1. The Scriptures furnish the man of God unto every good work (2 TIM. 3:16-17).
  2. All things necessary for our salvation have been written down (JN. 20:30-31).

## III. Some in the Lord’s church follow tradition.

- A. Some do the right thing for the wrong reason, and to them it becomes tradition.
  1. Some preached the gospel for the wrong reason (PHIL. 1:15-17).
  2. It is possible to even die for the cause of Christ without love, but it profits nothing (1 COR. 13:3).
  3. Some do alms to be seen of men (MT. 6:2-4; ACTS 5:1-11; 1 COR. 13:3).
  4. Others pray to be seen of men (MT. 6:5).
- B. Some, today, do the right thing for the wrong reason.
  1. If a matter is not of faith, it is sin (ROM. 14:23).
    - a. Faith comes by hearing (the message of) the word of God (ROM. 10:17).
    - b. Many, in the Lord’s church today, do not practice the proper worship, teach the right doctrine, etc. because it is a matter of tradition with them. They do so because their parents did it or their friends do it.



2. Some worship properly and attend the services of the church, because it is what their parents did. Their actions are not based upon faith but upon tradition.
  3. If there is a push to change the doctrine, practice, or worship of the church, they will not oppose it because they have no convictions (HEB. 11:1).
  4. Some preachers in the Lord's church in the last two or three decades have written books that do not make any arguments to support the thesis of the book, except to quote prominent preachers who were born after the age of miracles. (This is nothing more than following the traditions of men.)
- C. Things required:
1. To be right:
    - a. Right motives and
    - b. Right actions
    - c. An obedient person first yields his will to God, then he seeks to know what God wants him to do.
  2. To be wrong:
    - a. Either wrong motives,
    - b. Or wrong actions,
    - c. Or both wrong motives and wrong actions.
- D. The fruits of following traditions.
1. The church can easily be led astray by following the traditions of men, because we are following interpretations of the Scriptures that might be wrong.
    - a. I do not know how many times I have heard someone reply to a point I was making by saying: "Brother so and so does not teach that."
    - b. I can name a number of issues where this is the primary argument to support what I am convinced is false doctrine. (Neither Goebel Music's book nor Curtis Cates' book make very many [if any] arguments to support their premises, except to appeal to tradition. Mac Deaver makes a number of logical arguments in his book, but he bases his arguments upon a flawed premise and commits several logical errors in his book.)
  2. We are not able to convert honest-hearted people to the gospel.
    - a. When we quote a brother (e.g. Guy N. Woods, Alexander Campbell, etc.) to support our doctrine, it has no effect on the denominational person with whom we are studying.
    - b. Would you be influenced by the claim that Martin Luther taught such and such?
  3. But someone might say: "Marion, haven't you quoted men who lived after the age of miracles?"

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- a. I have quoted men when they made sound arguments (I was giving credit to the argument). It is not wrong to quote a sound argument because the argument either stands or falls upon the basis of it being either sound or unsound.
- b. I have quoted authorities (Greek authorities etc.) to show why my arguments are sound. (I have acknowledged that some of these authorities have errors in their writings.)
- c. I have quoted various men to prove that certain men are unrighteous because they fellowship one man who teaches doctrine “X” and disfellowship another man for teaching doctrine “X.”

# Maintaining the Message

John Bellah



A native of Oklahoma City, John graduated from Choctaw High School and continued his studies at Oklahoma Christian and the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies. He and his wife, Rhonda, have one daughter, Callie. They all attend the Barnes church of Christ. John has been published in the *One Heart Journal*. He has also been instrumental in developing themes for the lectureship for the past several years, including creating the topic for this year's lectureship. John is also an avid Bible collector and knowledgeable about various versions.

## INTRODUCTION

Defining the subject, "The churches of Christ must maintain the message," is not an easy task by any means. First, one must determine what it means to maintain, and then define what message is to be maintained. In PSALM 119:160 the psalmist declares: "The sum of thy word is truth; And every one of thy righteous ordinances endureth for ever." It is assumed that regardless of what man does to destroy the word of God, it will endure. This is to say that every man will be accountable for what God has said, not what man has changed. So what does it mean to maintain the message if it never changes? We must ask many questions about ourselves to determine if we are maintaining the message as it was given to us.

## BODY

- I. What does it mean?
  - A. What does it mean to "maintain"?
    1. Definition according to the 1828 Ed. of Webster's Dictionary:
      - a. To hold, preserve or keep in any particular state or condition; to support; to sustain; not to suffer to fail or decline;
      - b. To hold; to keep; not to lose or surrender;
      - c. To continue; not to suffer to cease;
      - d. To keep up; to uphold; to support the expense of
      - e. To support with food, clothing and other conveniences
      - f. To support by intellectual powers, or by force of reason;
      - g. To support; to defend; to vindicate; to justify; to prove to be just;
      - h. To support by assertion or argument; to affirm.

# Maintaining the Message

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2. By applying modern use of the word “maintain,” we can rule out our Christian life as something we are to merely maintain
  - a. Today we often equate the term maintain with complacency rather than preservation
  - b. People often speak of “maintaining their personal faith”, yet there is often a trend toward complacency. The Bible teaches that we are to do more than merely maintain or “get by”.
3. It is said that our message is in our Christian walk, but this message alone is not what we are merely maintaining, for we must:
  - a. Grow
    - (1) 1 CORINTHIANS 3:1-3
    - (2) EPHESIANS 4:15
    - (3) 1 PETER 2:2
    - (4) 2 PETER 3:18
  - b. Endure
    - (1) JAMES 5:11
    - (2) 2 TIMOTHY 2:11-15
- B. When we say “maintaining the message” we mean that the message must be maintained in its original form.

## II. What is the message that must be maintained?

- A. The Gospel
  1. 1 CORINTHIANS 15
  2. 2 TIMOTHY 1:10
  3. 2 TIMOTHY 2:8
  4. To be preached
    - a. 2 TIMOTHY 2:2
    - b. 2 TIMOTHY 4:2
  5. To be obeyed
    - a. 2 THESSALONIANS 1:8
    - b. 1 PETER 4:17
- B. The Power of the Gospel
  1. ROMANS 1:16
  2. 1 THESSALONIANS 1:5
  3. 2 TIMOTHY 1:8
- C. The Benefits of the Gospel
  1. Spiritual Benefits
    - a. Salvation (1 CORINTHIANS 1:18)

- b. Spiritual Family (i.e. the Church)
    - c. Access to God through Christ
      - (1) ROMANS 8:27
      - (2) ROMANS 8:34
      - (3) HEBREWS 7:25
      - (4) 1 TIMOTHY 2:5
  - 2. Well disciplined life which often results in:
    - a. Healthy marriage
    - b. Well-mannered children
    - c. Financial security
    - d. Physical health
- III. Why must we?
- A. If we don't who will?
  - B. God demands it. (EPHESIANS 3:10)
- IV. How do we do it?
- A. Our manner of life affects the reception of our message
    - 1. Some are often called hypocrites, sometimes rightfully so, thus turning away many from ever accepting the message of the Gospel.
    - 2. On the other hand, do we behave ourselves as so-called "Religious Nuts" by commercializing and making common the sacred message of Christ?
  - B. The reception of the message depends on our consistency, our accuracy, and our boldness when we share it and mold our lives by it.
  - C. Consistency of our message
    - 1. Consistent in personal lives
      - a. Am I ashamed to call myself a Christian?
      - b. Is the message I send of Christ or of the world?
      - c. Are other Christians ashamed that I call myself a Christian?
    - 2. Consistent as Christ's Church
      - a. Consistent with regards to our fellowship of other brethren
        - (1) JAMES 2:1
        - (2) Do I hold my friends to the same standard as I do others who teach and practice the same things?
        - (3) Do we fellowship some congregations and not others who are teaching and preaching the same thing?
      - b. Consistent in our worship and doctrine
        - (1) Singing and Entertainment

# Maintaining the Message

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- (2) Miracles
- (3) Role of Women
- (4) Are we still considered “people of the Book”?
- (5) Do we still “call Bible things by Bible names and do Bible things in Bible ways”? (COLOSSIANS 3:17)
- D. Accuracy of our message
  - 1. Accurate in our study
    - a. Is our source accurate?
      - (1) Translations
      - (2) Popular teachers and Church traditions (1 JOHN 5:9)
    - b. Is my interpretation accurate?
      - (1) Do I interpret the Scriptures like Jesus?
      - (2) Do I have an honest heart?
      - (3) Does my interpretation contradict Scripture?
  - 2. Accurate in our teaching
    - a. We must teach what is true.
      - (1) JOHN 8:32
      - (2) JOHN 17:17
    - b. We must be willing to be accurate even if it isn’t popular.
      - (1) PROVERBS 3:3-4
      - (2) 1 THESSALONIANS 2:3-6
- E. Boldness of our message
  - 1. Boldness in our faith
    - a. We must trust God that his word stands.
      - (1) 1 CORINTHIANS 2:5
      - (2) 1 PETER 1:25
    - b. We must be willing to share the Gospel.
    - c. Are we willing to make necessary changes both personally and as a church?
  - 2. Boldness in battle
    - a. We must be willing to defend the Gospel.
      - (1) JUDE 1:3
      - (2) PHILIPPIANS 1:27
    - b. We must be willing to suffer persecution or hardship.
      - (1) 2 TIMOTHY 3:12
      - (2) 1 PETER 4:15-16

## CONCLUSION

We must as Christians recognize the importance of maintaining the message. Throughout our history we have seen examples of this, beginning with Jesus and the Apostles, through the Restoration movement, and even till now there are still men and women willing to “maintain the message”. It cannot be done without diligence on our part to preserve the message as it was given to us with accuracy and our maintaining consistency with regards to our teaching and manner of life so that it will be received. We must do it with the boldness that only a Christian can have or else the 21<sup>st</sup> Century church will become stagnant and die. We must not be willing to accept failure because the world depends on us.





# Christianity in the Modern Workplace

Jeff Hendrix



Jeff is a member of the Grand Boulevard church of Christ in Oklahoma City, OK. He has been a student at the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies for several years. Jeff is active in his local congregation and takes every opportunity to preach that he comes across. In addition to all this, Jeff balances his preaching with a time consuming secular job, making him just the right speaker to address this difficult topic in our lectureship. This is Jeff's first time to speak on the Annual Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies Lectures.

## INTRODUCTION

- A. Ever since the creation of man, God has seen fit for him to work. While in the garden, he tended the garden, and when because of sin Adam and Eve were removed from the garden, it was then that man was told his labor would be by the sweat of his brow. And so today, though we all may not work by the sweat of our brow, we still have the obligation to provide for our families.
- B. When a child of God enters into the work place, we need to understand that while we are there we are to give our best to our employer.
- C. This may be difficult for whatever reason, but we cannot lose focus on our task. If we are the employer or manager, we need to understand and learn what it takes to be fair to those we are to be over.
- D. It is so easy to lose our prospective and our direction of whom and what we are to be at work and away. We can so very easily find ourselves drifting away from the love of our God and find ourselves living for that which is the pleasure of this world.
- E. What a joy and blessing it is when we can share the gospel with those who have never heard or to help one become restored who has for whatever reason chosen to walk away. One of those places we can do this is our work place.
- F. We too need to remember that this world is not our home, and we will be judged by the way we live in this world. With that which we say and that which we do, we cannot afford to entangle ourselves with that of this world.
- G. The fact is that in today's job market there are more workers than jobs and I am afraid it is going to get worse before it gets better. Some of us work 8-12 hours a day, 5-6 days a week just to make ends meet, and sometimes it seems like there is never enough time or money to go around. We still find ourselves in that old predicament. We have to steal from Peter to pay Paul. We may find ourselves moving things around in our lives

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and putting first things last, and things that should be last in our lives we put first. We at first may have hated having to work on a Sunday, but the more of them we work the easier it becomes. The guilt we may have felt is no longer there, or maybe we miss a dinner or two at home. The more we miss the easier it becomes. We may miss a school event of one of our children. This can become a very easy trap for us to fall into. In fact, I will go so far as to say that this could be one of Satan's tools he uses against us. These are some of the points I would like for us to look at pertaining to Christianity in the work place.

## BODY

### I. GIVING OUR BEST TO OUR EMPLOYER

Brother Wayne Jackson wrote an article in the *Christian Courier* pertaining to that of Christian work ethics. Wayne wrote:

A Christian should have the sort of work ethic that makes his peers sit up and take notice. He arrives on time and works his full shift. He does not ask someone else to clock out for him! He does not sit around on company time. The child of God takes great pride in his work; he does the very best job he can. And he doesn't pilfer from his employer. I recently read about a receptionist who would never use company stamps to pay for personal postage; if it was a matter of only a few cents, she put the money in the till. Her conduct was so unusual that other office personnel talked about it. Some "higher ups" took notice and before long she was offered a much more responsible position.

A Christian should be so conscientious that he is never called into question. He should go the second mile to be a good worker.

Finally, we should be happy employees! We should not continually gripe about our pay, the conditions under which we work, etc. If one cannot abide his work environment, he should let it be known in a firm but courteous fashion. If intolerant conditions persist, and he is unhappy, he should seek employment elsewhere. Ideally, the Christian should be such a hard-working, honest, cheerful employee that the company does not want to lose him. But, in the final analysis, one should not make his work associates miserable with constant bickering.

One of the most valuable contributions a parent can make to the future welfare of his child is to teach him how to work early in life. Reward him for good work. Demonstrate to him that it pays to work hard, to work well, and to accomplish his chores on time. In so doing, you will be inoculating him against a lot of grief in years to come.

- A. When we receive earnings for what we do, does our employer ever skimp on our pay?

- B. If we expect all our pay for the work we have done, should our employer have the same thought when it comes to our own production?
- C. Paul instructed the church at Ephesus not to be men pleasers or to give eye service (EPH. 6:5-9).
- D. We must be willing to give 100% of our labor if we expect 100% of our pay (COL. 3:22-23).
- E. We must show we are worthy of the pay we receive (TITUS 2:9-10).

## II. DANIEL HAD HIS PRIORITIES IN ORDER AND REFUSED TO COMPROMISE

- A. Many are there within the word of God that one could point to and call an example to follow, and one such person is Daniel.
- B. Daniel was made a eunuch (DANIEL 1:3-4) (nothing was more shameful to a Hebrew than one who could not bear children).
- C. Daniel's name was changed to reflect that of a Babylonian false god (Belteshazzar) (DAN. 1:7).
- D. Daniel purposed in heart and refused the king's food (DAN. 1:8).
- E. Daniel sought to please, God and God brought Daniel in favor with his captors (DAN. 1:8-9; 2:48).
- F. Daniel was pressured to conform (DAN. 1:10).
- G. Even under the threat of death Daniel continued steadfastly in his prayer life (DAN. 6:10).
- H. Daniel never lost focus on who it was that he was living first and foremost to please and that was God. Because Daniel sought to please God first, God saw fit to bless Daniel. How God did this I cannot explain, but we see the same blessing given to Joseph (GEN. 39:1-4).

## III. WE CANNOT AFFORD TO LIVE FOR THE PLEASURES OF THIS WORLD.

- A. We must heed that which we have heard (HEB. 2:1).
- B. Drifting from the truth requires absolutely no effort on our part.
- C. It is a gradual process.
- D. It could be said that drifting away begins in the heart (JAMES 1:14-15; PROVERBS 23:7).
- E. If we make time for everything else except that which should be our first love, we are we drifting. (Ps. 1:2; 119:97; 119:103)

## IV. USING OUR WORK PLACE TO SPREAD THE WORD OF GOD

Question: If we (the Lord's church) refuse to step up and tell the lost of their spiritual state, then who will? Who else outside the body has the way to the truth? We are God's chosen, and a field for us to plant in has been given to us. The world is ours to preach and teach to. If one has to narrow it down to an individual place to plant such as

# Christianity in the Modern Workplace

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our work place, some of us spend more time at work than we do at home. What an advantage we have if only we would take heed of this opportunity!

- A. We must always be ready to preach the word (2 TIMOTHY 4:2).
- B. Our God wants all to be saved (2 PETER 3:9; 1 TIM. 2:3-4).
- C. Our mindset needs to be like that of the Apostle Paul (2 COR. 5:9-11)
- D. We can be like that which the Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippian church (PHILIPPIANS 4:13).

## V. OURS IS NOT A WORLDLY WALK

One thing we must remember is that we are no longer of this world. Too many times we forget who we are, and we can find ourselves involved in things at our work place we never thought would be possible. We need to heed what words we use when we are around those of the world. Who will listen to one whose actions are the same as the guilty?

- A. We need to grow in the knowledge of our Lord (2 PET. 3:18).
- B. If one refuses to grow, how can one teach?
- C. Every day is another opportunity for us to be more Christ-like (1 PET. 1:5-8).
- D. Many times in the work place we may find our tongue out of control (JAMES 3:8-12).
- E. There is nothing funny about a joke that is full of filth or prejudice. If we become used to using “off color” words, what an embarrassment it would be to use these words in front of our spouse, children, or grandchildren. We may even slip up in front of our brethren. But this is only one of many things we may bring home with us from the workplace. A lot of us may bring home the stress of our jobs and take it out on the ones we love. We need to prioritize our lives and put back in order first things first, and the rest will follow.

## VI. PRIORITIZING OUR LIVES

- A. A lot can be said of one who is a responsible employee or employer (COL. 3:22; 4:1).
- B. We are to provide for our spouse and children (1 TIMOTHY 5:8; 2 THESS. 3:10).
- C. But our first priority must be to GOD. We all must put God first in our lives.
- D. Jesus warns us about seeking out the pleasures of this world (MATT. 6:19).
- E. There is more to life than worldly possessions (LK. 12:15).
- F. We all want happiness and a peaceful life, but the misconception is that people think this only comes from being wealthy. That is so far from the truth. If it were true, you would never hear of a rich person taking their own life. It is so easy to fall into the trap of “the more we have, the more we want, the more we want, the more we compromise our life.”

## VII. BEING A GOOD PROVIDER

- A. Outside the written word of God, nothing is more precious to a faithful child of God than having a family that seeks together to do that which is pleasing to God.
- B. We need to provide for our families such things as food, shelter, and clothing
- C. We sometimes blur the line between necessities and luxuries. We sometimes think because our friends or families have a new car or home we like them deserve the same, but what we do not ask is whether their priorities are the same as ours?
- D. Solomon wrote in proverbs, "Better is a little with the fear of the Lord." (PRO. 15:16)
- E. Maybe instead of giving in to the pleasures of this world, it would be better that through our own lives we show our families a deep respect for the Lord.
- F. Fearing the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. (PRO.1:7)
- G. Fearing the Lord prolongs our days. (PRO. 10:27)
- H. Fearing the Lord causes one to avoid sin. (PRO. 16:6)

## VIII. PROVIDING A HOME WHERE LOVE LIVES

- A. Not only are we to show our families to fear God, we too must provide for them a home that is full of love. (PRO. 15:17)
- B. Is it not better to have a home full of love then to have a home full of luxuries that may and can cause us turmoil and strife? (PRO. 17:1)
- C. Question: Do family troubles come from a home that has love and peace or a home where money and luxuries run endless and love is lacking?
- D. We need to realize that we must first provide for our families that which should be first and that is our spiritual life, even if it means we have to cut back on the luxuries in life.
- E. This is but two of many examples we can read about in the Bible, and we can see how God blesses those who seek Him first.

## IX. WE MUST BE AN EXAMPLE FOR OTHERS

- A. We are to be imitators (1 COR.11:1).
- B. We have examples to follow (PHILIPPIANS 3:17).
- C. We are a new man (EPH. 4:17-24).
- D. We are judged by the language we use (EPH. 5:4,12; LK. 4:22).
- E. Our conduct tells who we are.
- F. We are to conduct ourselves with meekness and wisdom (JAMES 3:13).
- G. Our conduct must be honorable (1 PET. 2:12).
- H. Our conduct should show others where we place God and our fellow man in our lives. (MATT. 22:37-40)

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## X. THE RIDICULE WE FACE AS A CHRISTIAN IN THE WORKPLACE

- A. There have been those and there will continue to be those who will ridicule Christians.
- B. There are those who discriminate against us for who we are.
- C. We must never lose heart. We have our history to look back on and how those who have gone to their reward have stood against those who chose to do damage against the church. Our Lord was betrayed by one of His own and denied by another. He then was beaten, arrested, and murdered on a cross for crimes He never committed. (MATTHEW 26 & 27)
- D. If more examples are needed, there was John the Baptist who was put in prison (MATT. 4:12).
- E. Stephen was beat to death for what he taught (ACTS 7:54-60).
- F. Saul persecuted the Church (ACTS 8:1).
- G. The apostle Peter was imprisoned (ACTS 12:4).
- H. The apostle Paul was stoned to death (ACTS 14:19).
- I. Paul and Silas were both beaten and imprisoned (ACTS 16:16-34).
- J. Many more examples can be given of how our brethren were murdered, beaten, and imprisoned for doing nothing more than spreading the gospel. Yes, today in this nation we live in, we are ridiculed for being Christians, and we may even be discriminated against. But we must let nothing come between us and our God. There are many in foreign lands still being beaten and put to death for spreading the word of God, and we must never forget these brethren when we approach the throne of God in prayer.

## CONCLUSION

We can never compromise our salvation for the pleasures of this world. We cannot afford to allow ourselves to be entangled with or for the things of this world. Would it be fair to say if we work for the pleasures of this world, do we not then become a slave to the things of this world?

- A. Jesus tells us not to labor for the food of this world, but for the food which endures to everlasting life (JOHN 6:27).
- B. We are not to fix our minds on the things of this world (COL. 3:1-3).
- C. We should not anxiously worry about food shelter and clothing (MATT. 6:19-34).
- D. If we find ourselves working for the pleasures of this world, how is it then we can explain away 1 JN. 2:15-17?

**We first must look at our lives, and if need be, let's reprioritize our lives, starting first to seek out pleasing God. Placing Him first in our lives will cause everything else to fall into place.**

# The Church Triumphant

D. Norman Easter



Norman studied at the University of Tulsa and Cameron University, receiving training in religion, philosophy, speech, and counseling. He began preaching in 1950, preaching his first meeting at the age of 15. He has taught in several states and overseas in Russia and the Ukraine. Norman and his wife, Lois, have three children. In 2006, Norman retired from local work and now does holds gospel meetings, speaks on lectureships, and does fill-in preaching. He also operates a clock repair shop in Bethany.

## INTRODUCTION

MATTHEW 16:18 "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

- A. Jesus promised to build a triumphant church on the foundation of His Sonship. MT. 16:13-18
- B. The prophets declared His kingdom, "an everlasting kingdom."
- C. The church was built on an eternal purpose. EPH. 3:10,11
- D. Its members were to enter an "everlasting kingdom." MT. 25:34,46 ; 2 PET. 1:10,11
- E. Jesus died for the church, "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." EPH 5:27; 1 JN. 1:7-2:2; ROM. 8:1; 1 PET. 1:2
- F. The triumph of the church is the triumph of its members.
  - 1. To the seven churches of Asia, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh ..." "the tree of life," "not taste of the second death", "hidden manna", "power over nations", "clothed in white", "pillar in the temple." "sit with me on my throne."
  - 2. REV. 3:4 "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy."

## BODY

- I. TRIUMPHANT CHURCH IS THE TRIUMPH OF ITS MEMEBERHIP.
  - A. These have "overcome". They will be glorified with the Savior. 1 JN. 3:1,2; JN 17:22
  - B. A glorified inheritance. 1 PET. 1:3-5; COL. 1:5

# The Church Triumphant

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- C. Eternal life. 1 JN. 5:11,12
- D. Triumph over sin and the devil through the offering of Christ. EPH. 1:7; ROM. 6:3-11; COL. 1:21-23; 1 PET. 1:18; 1 PET. 1:21-25
- E. Triumphant over temptation and the world. 1 COR. 10:13; JS. 4:7; 1 JN. 4:4; 5:4,5
- F. Triumphant in life. Triumphant over self. The best life to live. ROM. 6:1-11; 2 COR. 5:17; EPH. 4:22; COL. 3:10; 1 PET. 1:14; HEB. 12:13
- G. Triumphant over death, hell and the grave. 1 TH. 4:13FF; HEB. 2:14,15; MT. 16:18; 1 COR. 15:55-57
- H. Triumphant over unseen powers. EPH. 6:12; 2 COR. 10:3,4
- I. Triumphant over sorrow, grief, disease.
- J. Triumphant over sorrow, grief and disease. ROM. 8:18; REV. 21:4
- K. Triumphant over false doctrines. Triumphant over rust, moth and decay Nothing to offend, dirty pollute or wear out. 2 PET. 1:3-5; MT.6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:
- L. Triumphant over our labours. MT. 11:28-30; HEB. 4:9;REV. 14:13 HEB. 10:34; 11:24-27; 13:14; 2 PET. 1:10; REV. 21:5; 2 PET. 3:13. Is there a safe street or road in America today? REV. 21:27 Children snatched on city streets and country roads. A victory over thugs, etc. REV. 21:8

II. A TRIUMPHANT CROWN OF LIFE. REV. 2:10

III. A TRIUMPHANT BRIDE. HEB. 12:22-23; REV. 22:1-4, 10-27

IV. A TRIUMPHANT CITY. REV. 21, 22

V. A TRIUMPHANT REUNION AND FELLOWSHIP



# The Timeless Truth

Frank R. Williams



Frank attended Yuba Junior College and the Northside School of Preaching, receiving a Master's of Sacred Literature. He and his wife, Martha, have four children. Frank has taught in several schools, such as the Northside School of Preaching, the School of Biblical Knowledge in Wetumka, OK, and now as the Dean of Students for the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies. He has preached for over 40 years, doing local work in several states and also teaching in India. He has been published in several papers and edited *The Spirit of Restoration*.

## INTRODUCTION

1 PET. 1:22-25 "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

- A. Some churches of Christ in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are struggling with their identity.
  - 1. This struggle is self-created, meaning the problem has come about because of decisions which these congregations have made themselves.
  - 2. It is a question of "authority."
    - a. As I teach, "The Church of the New Testament," I tell my class: "If the church under the oversight of the apostles did not do it, there is no authority for it."
    - b. That statement does not address "method," but authorized works and mission.
  - 3. For many years there was little disagreement among churches of Christ in America, as to authorized works and mission.
    - a. It was generally understood that churches of Christ were authorized by Christ, as head of the church, to engage in three areas of works and mission.
      - (1) First, there is worship "in spirit and in truth" – JOHN 4:24.
      - (2) Second, there is benevolence – ACTS 2:44-45.
      - (3) Third, the one mission of the church, evangelism – EPH. 3:10-11.
    - b. The church of the New Testament, the church revealed on the pages of the New Testament, is never found doing anything else.

# The Timeless Truth

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- c. When churches of Christ in the 21<sup>st</sup> century start doing “unauthorized” things, they lose their identity.
  - d. And no one should be surprised!
- B. Today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, some churches of Christ have changed in any of these areas, some have changed in one area, and some have changed in all three areas.
  - 1. Yet, the New Testament reveals the following in regard to “the timeless truth.”
  - 2. To those men who would become the apostles of Christ, Jesus said:
    - a. JOHN 14:25-26 “he shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance”
    - b. JOHN 16:12-13 “he will guide you into all truth ... shew you things to come.”
  - 3. This “timeless truth” became known as “the apostles’ doctrine” in ACTS 2:42 as those first converts to the gospel of Christ “continued stedfastly in the apostle’s doctrine.”
- C. Near the end of the period of revelation, inspiration, and confirmation, Jude identified “the timeless truth” in JUDE 3, as “the faith.”

## BODY

### I. THE TIMELESS TRUTH REVEALED

- A. It is important that we notice the words of JUDE 3.
  - 1. First, he addressed: “the faith” – not the subjective personal faith, but the objective, unchangeable revealed faith.
    - a. This is the “new covenant” of which Jeremiah wrote: JEREMIAH 31:31-34.
    - b. It is “the faith” which is not the Law of Moses, but marked the end of it and freed the Hebrews from it: GALATIANS 3:23.
    - c. It is “out of the faith” that one may be justified: GALATIANS 3:24.
    - d. It is “the faith” that freed the Hebrews from the “schoolmaster” – the “custodian” – the Law of Moses.
  - 2. Second, Jude used a most interesting word, when he wrote: “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”
    - a. The Greek word translated “once” (*apax*) means: “once for all” (Vine, p. 819), and Thayer gives: “once, one time” (p. 54).
      - (1) This same Greek word is used in HEBREWS 9:26 – addressing the death of Christ, “but now once in the end of the world” (Jewish world) Jesus died – one time, for all time, never to be repeated.
      - (2) Also in verse 27 – speaking of death, “it is appointed unto men once to die” – one time physically, never to be repeated.
      - (3) Then, in verse 28 – referring to the death of Christ, “So Christ was once offered” – once for all time, never to be repeated.

- (4) Finally, 1 PETER 3:18, referring Jesus' death, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins," – once for all time, never to be repeated.
- b. Thayer gives his personal comment on JUDE 3: "used of what is so done as to be of perpetual validity and never need repetition, once for all" (p. 54).
  - (1) Yes, it is true that the Greek word *apax* is used when it does not have this "once for all time" meaning.
  - (2) But, I believe it is used in our text, JUDE 3, in such a manner as to mean: "once for all time," never to be repeated.
- B. This being true, just what is Jude saying about "the faith?"
  1. There are two things to keep in mind as we examine the question.
    - a. First, "the faith" is the result of revelation, inspiration, and confirmation, and it was first given orally.
      - (1) When the apostles received it, it was revelation.
        - (A) 1 CORINTHIANS 2:12 "now we have received" – which equals revelation.
        - (B) 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23 "that which I received" – which equals revelation.
      - (2) When the apostles delivered it, it was inspiration.
        - (A) 1 CORINTHIANS 2:13 "Which things also we speak" – which equals inspiration.
        - (B) 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23 "I delivered unto you" – which equal inspiration.
      - (3) When the apostles did miracles, it was to confirm, first the spoken word, then the written word.
        - (A) MARK 16:20 "the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs" – which equals confirmation.
        - (B) HEBREWS 2:4-5 "was confirmed unto us by them who heard him ... both with signs and wonder ... miracles" – which equals confirmation.
      - (4) So, "the faith" was first given to the saints orally.
        - (A) ACTS 2:14 "Peter ... lifted up his voice and said."
        - (B) 2 THESSALONIANS 2:5 "I told you these things."
    - b. Second, "the faith" was given in written form, and the result is written the New Testament, which is a book that is revealed, inspired, and confirmed.
      - (1) JOHN 20:30-31 – "these are written."
      - (2) EPHESIANS 3:3 – "as I wrote afore in few words."
  2. This is what the apostle is affirming in 1 CORINTHIANS 13.
    - a. The apostle wrote when speaking about the miraculous age:
      - (1) Verse 9 – "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part."
      - (2) Then he followed with: "But when that which is perfect is come" – the complete written New Testament.

# The Timeless Truth

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- (3) “Then that which is in part shall be done away” – the miraculous age ends with the complete written New Testament.
- b. It is my personal opinion which has been reached after years of study that all the New Testament books were written before AD 70.
- 3. Therefore, “the faith” was given once for all time. It was not to be repeated through the centuries that followed.
- C. It is thus “the timeless truth!”

## II. BOUND IN HEAVEN FIRST – THE TIMELESS TRUTH

- A. It needs to be understood that this “timeless truth” was first bound in heaven, then on earth.
  - 1. When Jesus announced to the apostles, “I will build my church,” he also announced “the timeless truth” would be given.
  - 2. MATTHEW 16:19
    - a. A better translation of these words would be: “whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall have already been bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall have already been loosed in heaven.”
    - b. The apostles, as the “ambassadors for Christ” (2 COR. 5:20), had no authority to speak but by the authority of Christ.
    - c. His words were their words, and their words were his words.
  - 3. There is an interesting example of this in 1 CORINTHIANS 7.
    - a. In this chapter the apostle is addressing the subject of marriage. It is NECESSARY that we understand that Paul’s words are given, not only as “the timeless truth,” but in light of what he calls: “the present distress” in verse 26.
    - b. The problem, as some see it, starts in verse 12: “But to the rest speak I, not the Lord.”
      - (1) There are some who think that right in the midst of revelation and inspiration, Paul stopped and spoke only as a mere human.
      - (2) The same thoughts are expressed about the words of verse 25: “Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment.”
    - c. In verse 12, Paul is simply expressing the thought that Jesus while on earth said nothing about this subject, but it is necessary to keep in mind that Jesus did say, the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles “into all truth” (JOHN 16:13), and Paul’s words is part of that “all truth” which the Holy spirit guided him.
    - d. Now, in verse 25, Paul is addressing another area, not a “commandment,” but “judgment.”

- (1) There was not then, and there is not now, a “commandment” dealing with the subject of “the present distress” and marriage in the area of which the apostle writes.
- (2) But there is inspired “judgment” to guide one in all such cases.
- (3) That it is “judgment” and not a “commandment” is seen in verses 27-28.
  - (A) “Judgment” (Greek, *gnome*) means: “counsel, advice” (Vine, p. 622).
  - (B) Not the “counsel and advice” of a mere human, but one who is guided by the Holy Spirit – inspired counsel, advice.
  - (C) Thus, not Paul’s personal “judgment” as a mere man, but the counsel and advice of an inspired apostle.
- (4) The whole chapter must be understood in the context of “the present distress.”
- e. It must not be overlooked that Paul wrote in verse 17: “And so ordain I in all churches.”
  - (1) The Greek word used here is *diatasso*, a compound word: *dia* meaning “through,” and *tasso* meaning “to place in order, arrange, signifies to appoint” (Vine, p. 70).
  - (2) Therefore, to “ordain ... in all churches” is through placing in order and appointing in all the churches; thus, not just in Corinth.
  - (3) This was done both in commandments and judgments, law and freedom, as it relates to “the present distress.”
- B. “The timeless truth” must be understood as to why it is “timeless.”
  1. The Bible is not the word of man, but the word of God.
    - a. God is “timeless,” therefore the Bible being the word of God is also “timeless.”
    - b. When God ordained Jeremiah a prophet (JER. 1:5), Jeremiah replied: “I cannot speak; for I am a child.”
      - (1) God answered him: “whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak” (VERSE 7).
      - (2) Then, God informs Jeremiah how he would speak: “I have put my words in thy mouth” (verse 9).
  2. So all revelation and inspiration is “the timeless word of God.”
    - a. And because it is the word of God, Jesus said to his some to be apostles:
    - b. “Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall have already been bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall have already been loosed in heaven.”
    - c. “The timeless truth” came from heaven to earth!
- C. The apostle Peter addresses our subject in 1 PETER 1:22-25.
  1. Our salvation is dependent upon “the timeless truth!”
    - a. Verse 22 – “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth.”

## The Timeless Truth

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- b. Verse 23 – “Being born again” – “having been begotten again.”
  - (1) Verse 23 – “not of corruptible seed.”
    - (A) “of”: Greek, *ek* meaning “out of”
    - (B) “corruptible”: Greek, *phthartos* meaning “the mortal, liable to decay, such as the natural fleshly birth.”
    - (C) It is “out of corruptible seed,” which is the originating cause of the fleshly birth.
  - (2) Verse 23 – “but” – in contrast to the corruptible seed.
    - (A) “incorruptible”: Greek, *aphthartos*, being the negative of *phthartos*, so not subject to death, immortal.
    - (B) “by”: Greek, *dia*, here pointing to the instrumental cause of the spiritual birth.
    - (C) “the word of God”: the instrumental cause of the spiritual birth.
  - (3) Verse 23 – “which liveth”: Greek, *zontos* indicating “possessed with life and vigor” (Woods, *First Peter*, p. 51).
  - (4) Verse 23 – “abideth for ever”: Greek, *menonto* denoting that which “continues constant and unchanging” (Woods, *ibid.*).
    - (A) Guy N. Woods points out: “In LUKE 8:11, the ‘seed’ is declared to be the word of God; here, there appears to be a verbal distinction between the ‘word’ and the ‘seed,’ in that it is through the word of God that the seed begets, the word being the instrument of the begetting.” (*ibid.*).
    - (B) Woods continued: “The idea is parallel with that of JOHN 3:6, ‘That which is born (literally begotten) of the Spirit is spirit,’ the Holy Spirit there being made the germinal principle of life.” (*ibid.*)
    - (C) Woods concluded: “This principle, however, finds expression only through the word, operating in no other fashion. Children of God become such by being begotten through the word, a word which is preached, believed, and obeyed.” (*ibid.*)
  - (5) JAMES 1:18
- 2. In verse 24, the apostle shows the contrast between the natural and spiritual.
  - a. “For” - indicating reason – “all flesh is as grass.”
    - (1) “The grass withereth” – ultimately fades and perishes – so the flesh.
    - (2) “The flower thereof falleth away” – the beauty vanishes – so the beauty and pride of the flesh will vanish.
  - b. Verse 25 – “But”: contrast between the perishing, the vanishing and the timeless truth.
    - (1) “The word of the Lord endureth for ever.”

(A) The Greek term used here is not *logos* (used in verse 23), but *rhema*, a term more concrete, meaning an utterance, a thing said. (Woods, *ibid*).

(B) “endureth for ever”: Greek, *meno* (being a form of the same word used in verse 23) and meaning “to abide ... to continue to be, i.e. not to perish, to last, to endure” (Thayer, p. 399).

(2) Could there be truth more timeless than this!

3. Peter sums up the above in these words, verse 26: “And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”
4. Peter has combined the timeless truth, the eternal word of God, and the gospel which is God’s power unto salvation (ROM. 1:16).

## CONCLUSION

- A. The word of God is the only “timeless truth,” and in it, the churches of Christ live, move, and have their being.
- B. The churches of Christ cannot exist outside of the “the timeless truth!”
- C. “And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of this grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”

ACTS 20:32





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