

Issues of Division Among Modern Day Christians

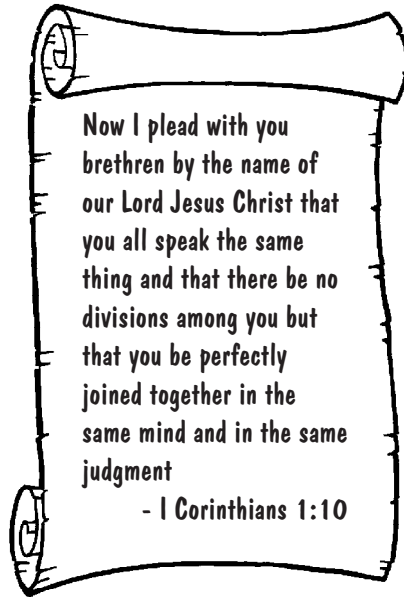
A Bible Class Study in Twelve Lessons

by

Kyle Pope



Ancient Road Publications™



Now I plead with you
brethren by the name of
our Lord Jesus Christ that
you all speak the same
thing and that there be no
divisions among you but
that you be perfectly
joined together in the
same mind and in the same
judgment

- 1 Corinthians 1:10

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By Kyle Pope

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Introduction

From the beginning of church history there have been issues which have arisen that have divided brethren. Not long after a church was first established in ancient Corinth brethren began to divide themselves over personal allegiance to different teachers (see I Corinthians 1:10-13). In response to this problem the Apostle Paul penned (through the direction of the Holy Spirit) the plea printed on the facing page, and reproduced throughout this study. These words should stand as a constant reminder to us that, although division may occur, it is the desire of God that His people be one. It must be the constant goal of children of God to put off division and confusion and stand together on the foundation of God's word. This study is offered with that goal in mind.

A word of thanks is due to a good friend and co-worker in the kingdom after whom I have modelled much of this study. Brother Norman Sewell put together and presented a series for the Southside church of Christ in Springfield, Missouri in the early 1980's entitled "The Issues That Divide Us." This study was invaluable in my own growth and consideration of many of these issues. Brother Sewell's study spanned some twenty lessons. I have arranged this study to be used in one quarter, with twelve lessons rather than thirteen (allowing one week for a review class or gospel meeting). Brother Sewell offered a number specific historical examples of the issues under consideration. For the sake of brevity I have chosen to simply summarize the problem and then move directly to the Scriptures which address them. Unfortunately, some issues which were not matters of division in the early 1980's have become such since I sat at the feet of Brother Sewell. I have added these issues to the present study.

It is my prayer that these outlines glorify God, edify my brethren, exalt the word of God and draw us closer in unity.

Kyle Pope
October 2002

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— Lesson One: Instrumental Music —

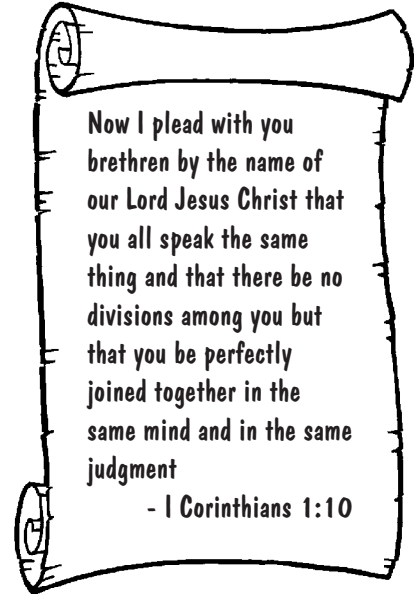
Introduction. Two issues worked to sever the relationships that had blossomed among Christians who were seeking to restore the teachings and practices of the New Testament church in the nineteenth century: instrumental music and the missionary society. We begin our study with the first of these issues.

I. Instrumental Music Was Used in the Old Testament in Worship to God.

- A. Instruments were used in connection with prophecy (1 Samuel 10:5-7).
- B. David used instruments in worship to God (2 Samuel 6:5).
 1. This was commanded by God (2 Chronicles 29:25-29).
 2. The Psalms encourage instruments in worship to God (Psalm 33:1-3; 92:1-4).
- C. The Prophet Amos rebuked the abuses of instrumental music in worship (Amos 5:21-24).

II. Instrumental Music Was Not a Part of Worship to God in the New Testament.

- A. The disciples of Jesus sang (Matthew 26:30).
- B. Christians were commanded to sing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16).
 1. The word translated “making melody” is the Greek word *psallo* (ψάλλω). “The original meaning of *psallo* was ‘pluck,’ ‘play’ (a stringed instrument); this persisted at least to the time of Lucian (cf. *Parasite* 17). In the Septuagint *psallo* frequently means ‘sing,’ whether to the accompaniment of a harp or (as usually) not (Ps. 7:18,19; 9:12; 107:4 and others). This process continued until *psallo* in Modern Greek means ‘sing’ exclusively... it is likely that some sense such as *make melody* is best here [i.e. Ephesians 5:19]. Those who favor ‘play’ ... may be relying too much on the earliest meaning of *psallo*” (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. by Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt & F. Wilbur Gingrich. Second Edition. University of Chicago Press. 1979. p. 891).
 2. Singing alone is described in worship (1 Corinthians 14:15). Note: While 1 Corinthians 14:7,8 would be a natural place to describe instruments in worship if they had been used, it does not refer to worship.



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- C. The Only reference to instruments in worship in the New Testament involves descriptions of heaven (Revelation 14:2,3).

III. The Old Testament Is Not the Pattern for New Testament Worship.

- A. The New Covenant has taken away the old (Hebrews 10:8-10).
1. There is no more authority for the use of instruments of music in worship to God in the Christian age than there would be for the burning of incense or the wearing of priestly robes.
- B. Simply because God has commanded something at one time does not authorize it for all time.
1. Moses was commanded to strike the rock in order to bring forth water at Horeb (Exodus 17:6).
 2. It was wrong for him to strike the rock at Kadesh, even though God had not specifically forbidden it (Numbers 20:8; 11-12).

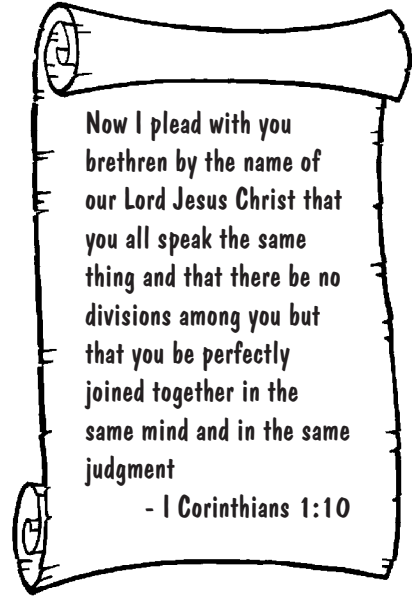
Conclusion. There is no authority to use mechanical instruments of music in worship to God in the Christian age. The use of instruments in the Old Testament does not authorize the church to make use of them under Christ.

REVIEW

1. What function was connected with instrumental music around the time when Saul was anointed king?
2. Was instrumental music in worship a human or divine innovation in the Old Testament?
3. Is there any occasion in which the Lord expressed His displeasure with how worship with instruments was carried out?
4. What is commanded in the New Testament concerning musical worship?
5. What change in meaning has taken place over time to the Greek word *psallo*?
6. What is the only context in which instrumental music in worship to God is described in the New Testament?
7. Does the Old Testament example authorize instruments in the New Testament?
8. Is there authority to use robes and incense in modern worship?
9. What had Moses been commanded to do at Horeb that was wrong for him at Kadesh?

— Lesson Two: The Missionary Society —

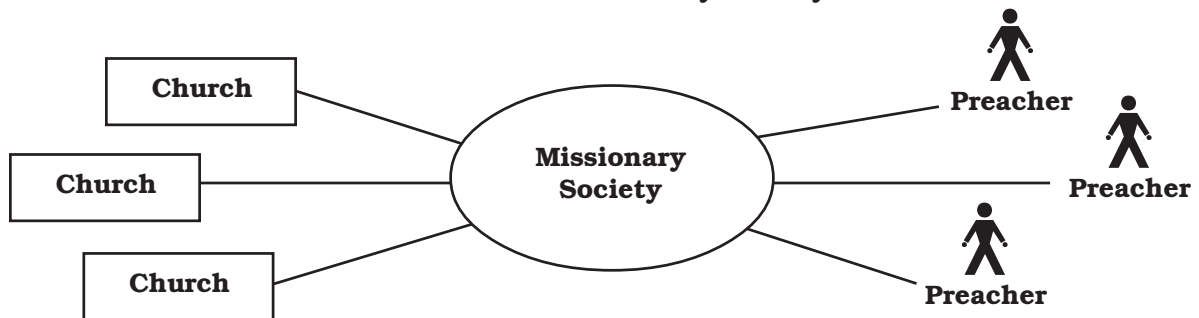
Introduction. As the effort to restore New Testament Christianity began to expand in the 1800's brethren began a scheme which was intended to promote evangelism. This plan involved the establishment of local, state, and finally nationwide "missionary societies." These societies involved paid delegates from churches convening in order to send out and support preachers in areas of need.



I. The Organization of the New Testament Church.

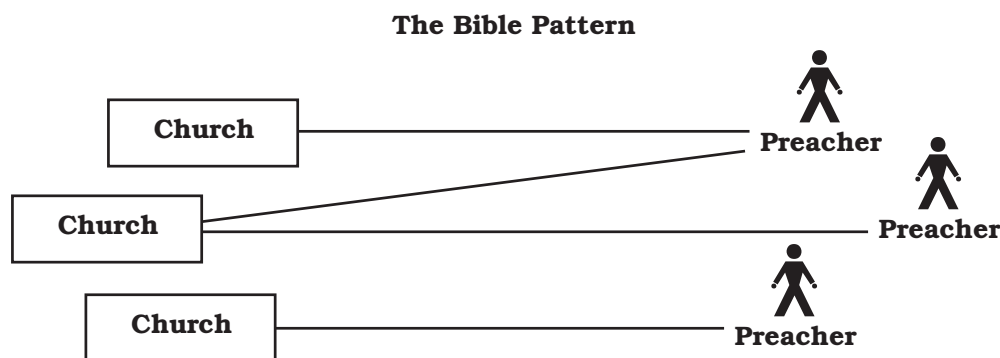
- A. The word "church" is a translation of the Greek word *ecclesia* (ἐκκλησία). It is defined, "properly a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly" (Thayer, pp. 195-196).
- B. *Ecclesia* is used in three distinct senses.
 1. The church universally (Matthew 16:18; Hebrews 12:22-24).
 2. The church locally (2 Corinthians 1:1).
 3. A congregation assembled (1 Corinthians 11:18; Matt. 18:17).
- C. There is distinct leadership over the church universally and locally.
 1. Jesus is the head of the church universally (Eph. 1:22,23).
 2. Local congregations are led by appointed elders and deacons (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9).
 3. The Apostles were given special authority to establish the church (Ephesians 2:19-22). There are no modern day Apostles (cf. Acts 15). There is no religious body larger than the local church yet smaller than the universal church.

The Structure of the Missionary Society Scheme



II. The Church's Work to Spread the Gospel in the New Testament.

- A. Local churches sent out men to preach (Acts 13:1-3; 14:26-28).
- B. Local churches supported those preaching in other places directly. (Philippians 4:15,16).
- C. There is no example of the church surrendering to a separate organization its own responsibility to spread the gospel.



Conclusion. While the desire to spread the gospel is an honorable motive, the “missionary society” approach did not follow the New Testament pattern. To accept this approach required that those who advocated following only New Testament patterns forsake the very cause which they were trying to promote. We must recognize that throughout church history many steps which have involved the creation of unscriptural elements of church organization began from the desire to promote teaching or improve efficiency. As Christians we must always trust that when we do God’s work in the way that God has communicated it to us in His word it is sufficient.

REVIEW

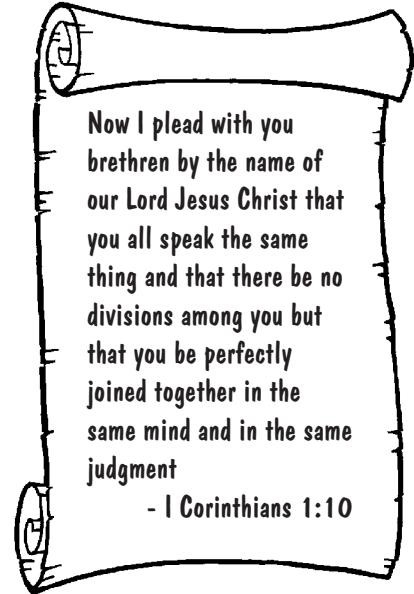
1. What was a “missionary society” and how did it function?
2. Who leads the church universally?
3. Does Scripture authorize any religious body greater than the local church and yet smaller than the church universally?
4. What was unique about the meeting in Jerusalem in Acts 15?
5. Who sent out men to preach in the New Testament?
6. In the New Testament how did churches support preachers working in other areas?

Lesson Three: Bible Classes

Introduction. Most brethren have always opposed the denominational practice of establishing “Sunday Schools” that are operated as distinct institutions from the local church. However some brethren in the 20th century also stood in opposition to Bible classes in general. This issue revolves around three factors: Is this dividing the church? Can women teach such classes? Must there be specific authority for all practices?

I. Dividing the Church.

- A. The church assembled. We observed in our last lesson that the word church can refer to a local congregation or to a local congregation assembled (p. 5).
 1. Those faithfully identified with a local congregation are always a part of that congregation but they are not always assembled “as a church” (1 Corinthians 11:18).
 2. The church is not “divided” when each of its members return to their homes, nor if they have small studies outside of the assembly (Acts 19:7-10; Acts 20:17-21), but instead when they are not joined “in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10).
- B. Small Bible classes, based upon age, gender, subject matter or maturity are not the church assembled. Just as the church in Ephesus had oversight over Paul’s teaching from “house to house” the church can organize and oversee small studies in homes, outside facilities or in the building where the church assembles.
 1. Smaller classes do not constitute the church assembled, so those commands which pertain to the church assembled (i.e. women’s silence, etc.) do not apply.



II. Women Teachers.

- A. Women are to keep silent in the assembly (1 Corinthians 14:34,35). The context of this instruction concerns behavior in the assembly. The Greek word translated “silent” is *sigao* (σιγάω) meaning, “to keep silence, hold one’s peace” (Thayer, p. 574).
- B. Women are not to teach nor have authority over a man (1 Timothy 2:11-13). The context of this instruction concerns behavior in general. The

word translated “silence” is the word *hesuchia* (ἡσυχία) meaning, “1. *quietness*; 2. *silence*” (Thayer, p. 281). This commands a quiet disposition not total silence.

1. Women are to be “teachers of good things” (Titus 2:1-3). This shows that there is some context outside of the assembly when women can be considered “teachers.”
2. Priscilla and Aquila in a situation outside of the assembly both explained the truth to Apollos (Acts 18:24-28). The Greek words translated “they took [him] aside” and “explained” are both 3rd person plural verbs in the Greek. So literally, “*they* took him aside and *they* explained to him the way of God more accurately.”

III. Specific & Generic Authority. While it is necessary that we have authority for what we do we can not always establish “specific” authority for all things that are generically authorized.

A. Example: The Lord’s Supper.

1. Jesus commands the Lord’s Supper (Matthew 26:26-29). This is a generic command which does not specify: 1. The nature of the elements; 2. The time of the observance; nor the 3. Context of its observance.
2. Specific authority is sometimes established by approved apostolic example and necessary inference. 1. Unleavened bread (Exodus 13:6; Matthew 26:17,18); 2. On the first day of the week (Acts 20:7); and 3. With the church assembled (1 Corinthians 11:17-20).

B. Example: Bible Classes. The church is commanded to teach (1 Timothy 3:14,15). We are not given specific authority for how to do this. Visual aids? Printed material? Radio? Small classes?

1. We do not have specific authority for classes separated by age assembled in the same building where the church comes together but we have generic authority for the church to teach and support teaching in or out of the assembly (Acts 18,19).
2. We do not have specific authority for women to be appointed teachers for women’s or children’s classes but we do have the generic authority that women can teach women and children and discuss the Bible in submission to a man outside of the assembly (Titus 2:1-3; Acts 18:24-28).

Conclusion. The church has authority to provide Bible classes for various ages at the place of assembly or wherever they may see fit. While women have restrictions under which they operate in the assembly and in regards to men they have the authority to teach other women and children outside of the assembly.

—Lesson Four: One Cup in the Lord's Supper—

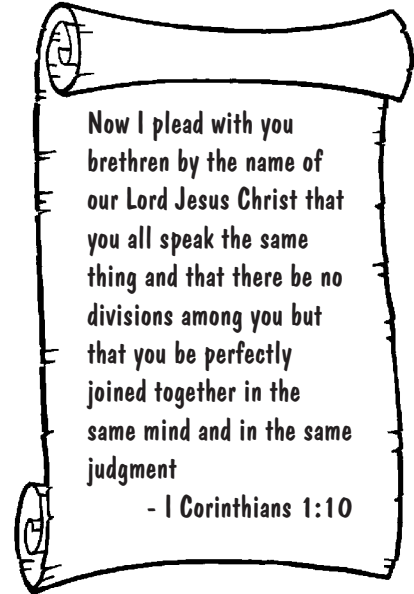
Introduction. Some brethren hold that the Scriptural pattern for observance of the Lord's Supper demands that the congregation use only one cup for the fruit of the vine. For some this allows for three symbolic elements: the bread (which represents Christ's body), the fruit of the vine (which represents Christ's blood) and the container (which some claim represents the New Covenant).

I. The Institution of the Lord's Supper.

- A. The synoptic gospels (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:14-20).
- B. Paul's account (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

II. The Elements of the Memorial.

- A. Unleavened bread (Matthew 26:17; Exodus 12:18-20).
 - 1. Representative of Christ's body (Matthew 26:26).
- B. Fruit of the vine. (Matthew 26:29).
 - 1. Representative of Christ's blood (Matthew 26:28).
- C. The container? (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; cf. Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24 "this is My blood of the new covenant").
 - 1. Matthew records the instruction "drink from it" (Matthew 26:27) followed by reference to the "blood of the new covenant" (Matthew 26:28). Paul, after the statement "this cup is the new covenant in My blood," records the command, "This do, as often as you drink [it] in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor. 11:25).
 - 2. The "it" in Matthew is that which is representative of the "blood of the new covenant" (i.e. the contents – 26:27,28).
 - 3. The "cup" in 11 Corinthians is "in blood" (i.e. liquid) which we are to "drink" (i.e. the contents) in memory of Christ (11:25).
 - 4. The Lord makes use of a figure of speech known as "metonymy" which is, "...when a subject is put for ... some circumstances pertaining to (or joined to) the subject: e.g., as when the place, or thing containing it, is put for that which is contained..." (*Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, E. W. Bullinger, pp. 567, 577).



III. One Cup or Many?

- A. Luke's account records that the Lord divided the cup before the meal (Luke 22:17,18).
 - 1. After the meal the same cup (which had previously been divided) is utilized in the institution of the memorial (Luke 22:20).
 - 2. Jesus' reference to drinking of the "fruit of the vine" in the kingdom is applied to what was divided before the meal in Luke just as it is applied to what was memorialized after the meal in Matthew (cf. Luke 22:17,18 & Matthew 26:28,29).
- B. All Christians everywhere partake of one bread (1 Cor. 10:16,17).
 - 1. All Christians everywhere partake of one cup of Christ's blood.

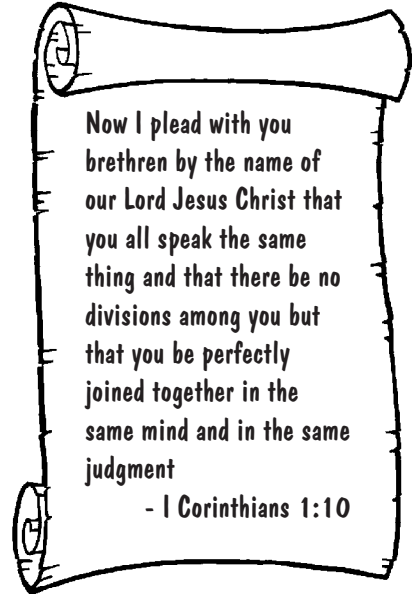
Conclusion. Scripture does not demand the use of a single common container in the observance of the Lord's Supper. Only the bread and fruit of the vine are assigned any symbolic significance in Scripture.

REVIEW

1. How can we be certain that the bread used in the Lord's Supper was unleavened?
2. In Matthew and Mark's accounts how does the Lord refer to the cup?
3. In Paul's account of the observance, what suggests that the contents, rather than the container is being referred to?
4. What figure of speech does Jesus use in reference to the cup? Explain how this figure of speech is used.
5. What does Luke tell us the Lord did to the cup before the meal?
6. Does Jesus associate the cup before the meal with what He would drink in the kingdom?
7. What does Paul claim that all believers do to the "one bread"?
8. Would the same apply to the cup?

— Lesson Five: The Located Preacher —

Introduction. As men and women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries moved away from denominational practices in worship and organization towards Biblical patterns, they rejected the false doctrines of the “clergy” and the “pastor system.” For some, opposition to these false practices extended to opposition to congregations having a “located preacher” at all.



I. The False Doctrine of the Clergy.

- A. Within the denominational world it is held that those who preach or serve in leadership positions in churches constitute a class referred to as the “clergy” [from Gr. *kleros* (κλῆρος) meaning “lot” cf. Deut. 18:2]. The members of the congregation are believed to constitute the “laity” [from Gr. *laos* (λαός) meaning “people”].
- B. Clergy are considered distinct from laity. They are called “Reverend” and believed by some to hold special rights to petition Deity.

II. The Pastor System.

- A. Many denominations grant to an individual chosen to preach for a congregation authority to lead and oversee the church.
- B. Taking the Scriptural term “pastor” [from Gr. *poimen* (ποιμήν) meaning “shepherd”], which is applied in the Bible to the group of men serving as elders, and applying it to the preacher, the “pastor” is viewed as the primary authority within a congregation.

III. Opposition to the “Located Preacher.”

- A. *Itinerant preaching.* Brethren who opposed a “located preacher” saw the example of preachers in the New Testament traveling from place to place as a binding (and restrictive) example.
- B. *Evangelistic oversight.* Looking to the instructions which Paul gave to Titus to “set in order the things that are lacking and appoint elders in every city” (Titus 1:5), the argument was made that authority was given to an evangelist (in general) over a congregation (including the eldership).
- C. *Mutual edification.* In order to meet the needs of the congregation for preaching when an itinerant preacher was not visiting the men of the

congregation took care of these duties themselves, practicing “mutual edification.”

IV. The Biblical View.

A. Clergy.

1. Unlike the Law of Moses the gospel of Jesus Christ does not establish a special priestly class (as distinct from the laity).
2. All Christians are priests with the same rights to petition God (1 Peter 2:4,5; Hebrew 4:14-16).
3. Only God should be called “Reverend” (Psalm 111:9 KJV).

B. The pastor system.

1. There is no single human pastor over a congregation, but a group of men serving in this role (Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:1-5).
2. A pastor (i.e. elder) can preach and receive support for preaching (1 Timothy 5:17,18).

C. The “located preacher.”

1. Preachers in the New Testament both traveled and stayed in one place (Acts 8:1; 19:8-10; 20:31).
2. Preachers in the New Testament were supported materially for preaching by the church (1 Corinthians 9:11-18), supported themselves (1 Corinthians 4:12) and received support from other churches while working elsewhere (Philippians 4:15,16).
3. The “authority” given to Titus came from the apostolic instructions of Paul, and from the authority of the revealed word of God (Titus 1:1-5).
4. The Bible does not teach congregational submission to a preacher. Although it does teach submission to the eldership (1 Peter 5:1-5).
5. Human authority is subservient to God’s word (Acts 5:29).
6. All members edify one another as they are able. This does not negate the right of a congregation to support a Christian to preach regularly or as they travel (1 Thessalonians 5:11-14).

Conclusion. A preacher is nothing more than a Christian man who works to teach the gospel. A congregation is authorized to support a preacher whether he is traveling or with them on a regular basis. An evangelist’s “authority” comes only from the fact that they present the word of God. A preacher does not have “authority” over an eldership except to the degree that he teaches submission to the word of God.

Lesson Six: Premillennialism

Introduction. Many groups and individuals throughout church history have understood the reference to a 1000 year Messianic reign in Revelation 20:1-6 to refer to a future kingdom with Christ reigning upon the earth. In the United States, division occurred over this theory known as “Premillennialism” (i.e. *before the millennium*) within churches of Christ in the years between the First and Second World Wars.

I. The Establishment of the Kingdom of Christ.

A. *The kingdom in prophecy.* The Old Testament clearly promised the coming of a Messianic kingdom (Isaiah 9:6,7).

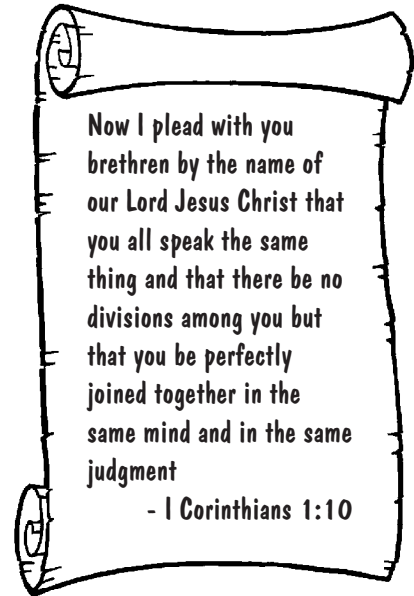
1. The time when this would happen was clearly indicated (Daniel 2:36-45).
2. *Four kingdoms.* Gold –Neo-Babylonian Empire (2:37,38). Silver – Medo-Persian empire (2:39a). Bronze – Greco-Macedonian Empire (2:39b). Iron and clay – Roman Empire (2:40-43).
3. In the time of the fourth kingdom (i.e. Rome) an eternal kingdom would be established (2:44,45).

B. The kingdom established.

1. Jesus lived and taught during the time of the Roman Empire (Luke 2:1; 3:10).
2. Jesus began to teach, “the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:15). The word translated “at hand” is the Greek word *eggizo* (ἐγγίζω) meaning, “to bring near, to draw near or come near; to approach” (Thayer, p. 164). This verb tense of this word is in the perfect tense, indicating, “an act or state to a point of culmination and the existence of its finished results” (*A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, by H. E. Dana & Julius R. Mantey, p. 200). Thus, Jesus declared the present (i.e. First Century) coming of the kingdom of God.
3. Jesus came to be a King (John 18:37). At his ascension He possessed all authority (Matthew 28:18).

C. The church and the kingdom are the same body.

1. Christians are in the kingdom (Colossians 1:13,14).



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2. John speaks of the kingdom's existence in the opening words of Revelation (1:6, NASB "a kingdom").

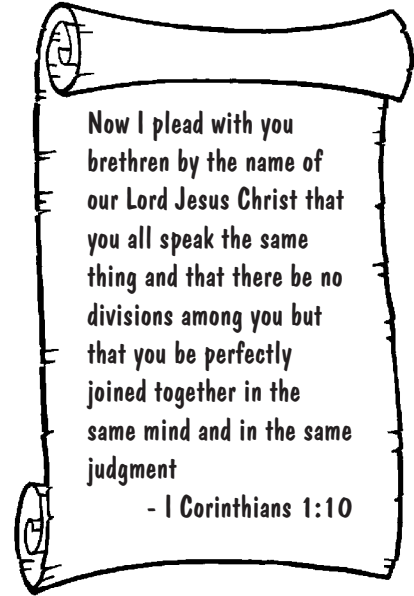
II. The Thousand Year Reign in Revelation 20:1-6.

- A. The context and style of the Book of Revelation. The book of Revelation is written during a time of persecution (1:9), in language to "signify" events that would "shortly take place" (1:1).
- B. Persecution - Victory cycles in the book.
 1. *Cycle One.* Five seals of hardship followed by a sixth seal of judgment and assurance that those persecuted were saved (6:1-7:17).
 2. *Cycle Two.* Six trumpets of hardship, and persecution of divine witnesses followed by a seventh trumpet proclaiming Christ's rule over all creation (8:1-11:19).
 3. *Cycle Three.* The dragon persecutes God's people, followed by the Lamb's assurance of His vindication (21:1-15:8).
- C. Clues to identify "Babylon" (*Cycle Four*). "Babylon" persecutes God's people, followed by the "Word of God" riding upon a white horse conquering, binding Satan and reigning 1000 years (16:1-20:6).
 1. "Babylon" is used as a *code-name* for Rome (cf. I Peter 5:13).
 2. This is seen in the harlot's name (17:5); the cause of her intoxication (17:6); the mountains upon which she sits (17:9 cf. Rome's hills) and her identification with "that great city that reigns over the kings of the earth" (17:18).
- D. The 1000 years reign analyzed. Just as in Daniel, Revelation associates the establishment of the kingdom with the time of Roman rule. The fall of "Babylon" (i.e. Rome) points to when human opposition to God is rendered spiritually ineffectual. This was accomplished when Jesus conquered death and was given all authority. The 1000 year reign began when Christ was exalted to His position as King. "1000 years" indicates a significant period of time, not a literal term, after which Jesus will come in final judgement (20:11).

Conclusion. Regardless of the popularity of the theory of premillennialism in the religious world, at its heart it rests upon a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature and significance of the church. Those who accept this theory diminish the importance of the church and teach (and look forward to) something which was never promised in Scripture.

— Lesson Seven: Support of Human Institutions —

Introduction. A number of issues revolving around the use and purpose of the “collection for the saints” led to division among brethren in the mid-twentieth century. The question of whether the church has authority to collectively support human institutions, such as Bible colleges or orphan’s homes, became pivotal in this controversy.



I. The “Collection for the Saints.”

- A. The example of the “Collection for the Saints” (1 Corinthians 16:1,2).
- B. The use of the “Collection for the Saints.”
 1. Relief of needy saints (Acts 11:27-30). This is referred to as “fellowship” with fellow saints (2 Corinthians 8:1-4). There is no example of the collection being used for benevolence to non-Christians (cf. Ephesians 5:11).
 2. Support of qualified widows (1 Timothy 5:3-16).
 3. Support of preaching (1 Corinthians 9:13,14; Philippians 4:15,16).
 4. Support of elders who “labor in the word” (1 Timothy 5:17,18).
- C. If the church is instructed to do some work, it is given authority to do what is necessary to carry out that work.
 1. Example: Since the church is commanded to assemble it may do what is necessary to secure a place to assemble (i.e. a home, a field, a borrowed facility, a building). (see Hebrews 10:24,25).
 2. While we must have generic authority for all that we do, we cannot expect to find specific authority for every need (see lesson three).

II. The work of the church.

- A. The church is the “pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).
 1. Its work and focus is primarily spiritual (Ephesians 3:8-11).
- B. The work of the church summarized (Ephesians 4:11,12).
 1. “Equipping of the saints for the work of ministry” (Ephesians 4:12a).
 2. “Edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12b).

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- C. It is not the work of the church to provide secular education.
 - 1. Church support of a school or college is not authorized.
 - 2. Individuals choose how to use their own money (cf. Acts 5:4).
 - D. It is not the work of the church to provide general benevolence to the world.
 - 1. The church does not fulfill its own responsibility for relief to needy saints by surrendering that responsibility to a human institution (James 1:27).
 - 2. The church has no right to expand its oversight over human institutions (cf. 1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Corinthians 4:6).
 - 3. Individual Christians should offer help to others as they have opportunity (Galatians 6:10; cf. Luke 10:25-37).

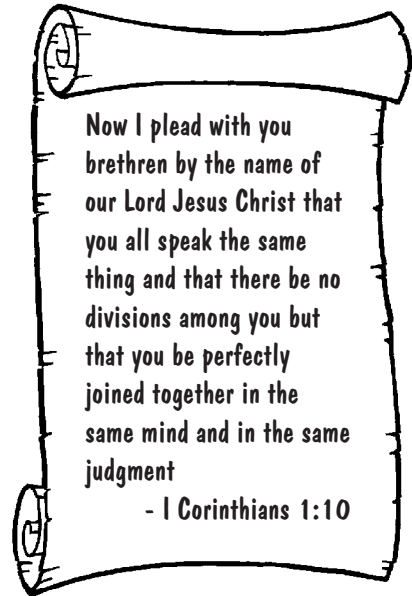
Conclusion. The church finds no authority in Scripture to financially and collectively support human institutions. As individuals, Christians have the right to choose how to use their own finances. The church must avoid expanding its involvement into any area outside its authorized work and purpose, or surrendering to a human institution matters for which it is responsible.

REVIEW

1. What does Paul call the contribution in his first epistle to the Corinthians?
2. What are the four examples of how the New Testament church used the collection?
3. If the church is generically authorized to carry out some work, is authority granted to do what is necessary to do that work?
4. What figure does Paul use in First Timothy to describe the church? What does this tell us about its purpose?
5. What are the two tasks that Paul tells the Ephesians are to be carried out by the church?
6. Does opposition to church support of a school mean that individuals cannot offer such support?
7. What dangers might come from the church expanding its activities beyond the those things which are authorized? Could the work of the church be abandoned in the process?
8. Should individual Christians help non-Christians when they can?

— Lesson Eight: The Sponsoring Church —

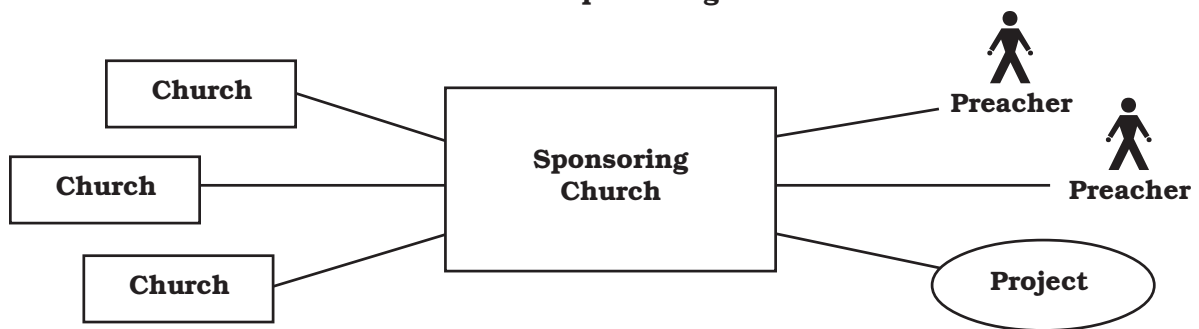
Introduction. In our second lesson we studied the unscriptural scheme known as the “Missionary Society” which divided brethren in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (see pp. 5, 6). In the twentieth century another approach began to divide brethren known as the “Sponsoring Church.”



I. The “Sponsoring Church Approach.”

- A. Unlike the “Missionary Society” which was dependent upon a separate organization the sponsoring church utilizes a host church to carry out the same work.
- B. The host church solicits other churches for support in some project which the sponsoring church is unable to carry out itself. Such projects may include:
 1. Nationwide or international broadcast programs.
 2. Support of preachers in foreign countries.
 3. Various collective evangelistic efforts.
- C. The sponsoring church bears sole responsibility for carrying out and monitoring the work.

The Structure of the Sponsoring Church Scheme



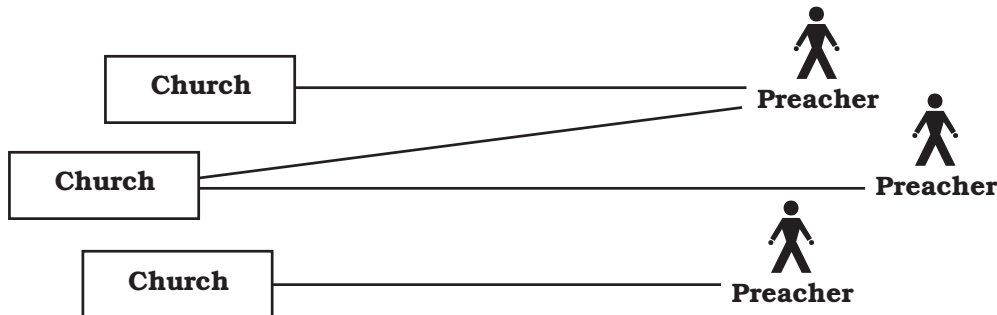
II. The Church’s Work to Spread the Gospel in the New Testament.

- A. Local churches sent out men to preach (Acts 13:1-3; 14:26-28).
- B. Local churches supported preaching directly (Philippians 4:15,16).
- C. There is no example of a church surrendering to another church its own responsibility to spread the gospel.

III. Important Considerations.

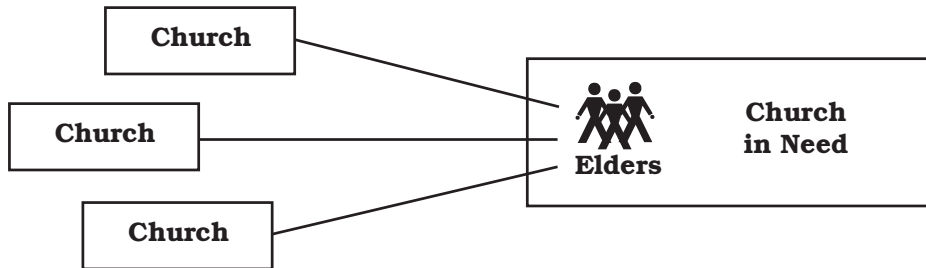
- A. The issue is not evangelism versus apathy. Evangelism can be carried out following New Testament patterns (1 Thessalonians 1:8).
- B. The issue is not cooperation versus noncooperation. When churches participate independently in common activities it is cooperation.
- C. Distinctions between Bible patterns for evangelism and benevolence.
 - 1. In Scripture churches sent to preachers directly to carry out preaching (Philippians 2:25).

The Bible Pattern for Evangelism



- 2. In Scripture churches sent to the elders of a church in need for benevolent relief (Acts 11:27-30).

The Bible Pattern for Benevolence

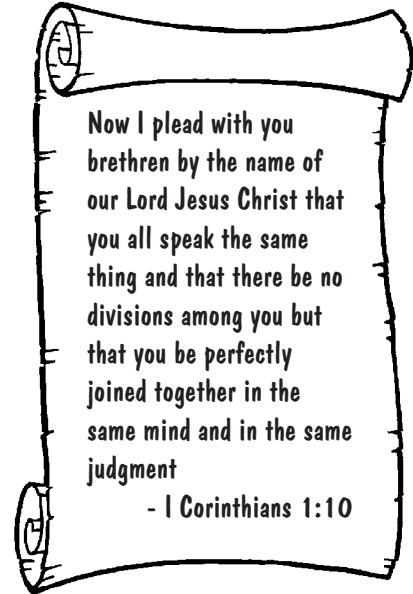


- D. Centralization is unnecessary and denominational (Acts 20:28).
- E. We must avoid evaluating spiritual success in terms of large human projects and the growth of visible infrastructure (Luke 17:20,21; Acts 8:4).

Conclusion. The same principles that made the “Missionary Society” unscriptural apply equally to the “Sponsoring Church” arrangement. When Christians do God’s work in God’s way we will be acceptable.

Lesson Nine: The Social Gospel

Introduction. In the late nineteenth century a movement began in the religious world known to history as the “Social Gospel.” This movement involved efforts aimed at improving social conditions. Churches built low-income housing, started soup kitchens and secular education programs. Among churches of Christ in the twentieth century this name is applied to churches who have directed a similar focus towards social activities or benevolent programs as a means towards evangelism.



I. The Corinthian Abuse of the Lord’s Supper.

- A. The Problem: 1. Not waiting for each other. 2. Observing a common meal and not a memorial (1 Corinthians 11:17-20).
- B. The Result: 1. Some went without eating while others were filled. 2. Those with nothing were shamed. 3. Contempt for the church was displayed (1 Corinthians 11:21,22).
- C. The Clarification: The Lord’s Supper is a memorial. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).
- D. The Solution: 1. When the memorial is eaten wait for one another. 2. Eat “at home” for hunger (1 Corinthians 11:33,34).
- E. Modern Application: It is not the work of the church to host and sponsor general common meals for social interaction.

II. Christian Interaction in the New Testament.

- A. New Testament Christians spent time with one another outside of the assembly (Acts 2:46, 16:15).
 - 1. While this was a reflection of their faith, it was not seen as an act of worship.
 - 2. This stands in contrast to Jewish and Pagan practices which involved eating for hunger in worship.
- B. The church collectively supported widows. (Acts 6:1,2). This was not a collective meal, as seen by the fact that the Apostles appoint men to take over the responsibility so that they could teach.
- C. Definition of Terms.
 - 1. “Fellowship.” Gr. *koinonia* (κοινωνία) - “Fellowship, association, community, communion, Joint-Participation, intercourse” (Thayer, p. 352).

In modern times many have come to use this term as a synonym for “social interaction.” The term itself simply refers to common participation in some activity. The nature of the activity may vary. In Scripture forms of the word are used to describe partnership in the fishing business (Luke 5:10) or mutual participation in persecution (Matthew 23:30). The focus is usually on “Fellowship in the Gospel” (Philippians 1:5; cf. 1 John 1:3; Acts 2:42). This is seen when the word is applied to the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 10:16); contributions to the Lord’s work (Romans 15:26; 2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:13 and Hebrews 13:16).

- a. While a place of assembly for worship could properly be called a “fellowship hall,” there is no authority for the construction of a kitchen and dining hall to house social functions as modern churches use this term “fellowship hall.”
2. “Love-Feasts.” Gr. *agape* (ἀγάπη) means, “1. Affection, good-will, love, benevolence. 2. Love-feasts.” (Thayer, p. 4). The use of this word for a type of meal is used only in Jude 12 (cf. 2 Peter 2:12-14).
 - a. Many Bible reference books leave the impression that Christians combined a social meal (*agape*) with the Lord’s Supper. Justification for this view is drawn from Paul’s discussion in First Corinthians eleven. It should be noted that: 1. It is not clear if the term “love-feast” refers the Lord’s Supper or a common meal outside of the assembly (like what we call a “pot-luck dinner.” 2. The Bible never makes such a distinction. 3. Paul clearly commands a separation of the memorial and meals for hunger.
 - b. The second century religious writer Tertullian, in his *Apology* gives a defense of the “love-feast” as he understood it. He describes Christians coming together and sharing food with each other towards a view of helping the needy. Prayer was offered before and after the meal. After this, Tertullian suggests, members led songs as a proof that this was not a drunken party (*Apology* 39).

Conclusion. Christians should spend time with one another outside of the assembly, yet it is not the work of the church to host and sponsor social activities. “Fellowship” is not a synonym for “social interaction.” New Testament churches never used benevolence as a means of evangelism (see lessons Seven and Eight).

— Lesson Ten: The Discipling Movement —

Introduction. In the late 1960's a movement began which was initially intended to promote evangelism. This effort, known as the "discipling movement," led to division but to the establishment of a denomination known as "The International Churches of Christ."

I. The Philosophy of the Discipling Movement.

A. "Love Bombing."

1. Much like the "Social Gospel" approach, International Churches of Christ (ICC) churches practice a technique to draw people by lavishing them with attention, interest, and friendship.
2. As the prospect is engaged in social activities, Bible studies or devotionals will be introduced.

B. Discipling Partners.

1. ICC churches teach that every convert should be assigned a "discipling partner" to whom they are accountable.
2. In many cases this involves a one sided approach of confession and accountability.
3. The "senior" partner can dictate who a convert should associate with, how much they should contribute, and other personal aspects of the "junior" partner's "discipleship."

C. Discipleship Baptism.

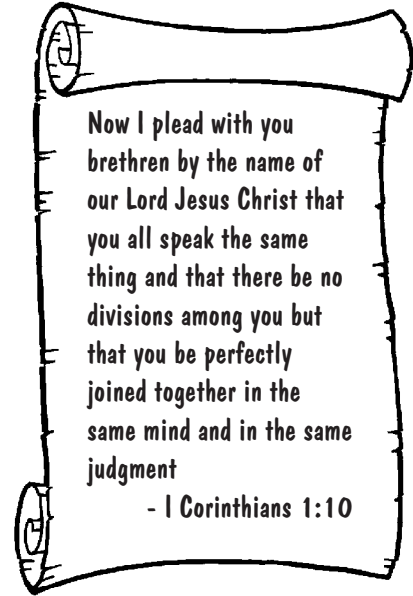
1. The ICC teaches that discipleship is a prerequisite to baptism.
2. Discipleship is defined by their own system of discipling partners, control, and submission.

D. Pillar Churches.

1. ICC churches have turned completely away from the Biblical patterns of congregational autonomy and a local eldership for every congregation.
2. In the United States two churches (Boston & San Diego) act as "Mother Churches" with elders who rule over all the churches in their section of the country. No other churches have elders.
3. Under these "Mother Churches" are regional "Pillar Churches" and under them "Capital City Churches," "Small City Churches" and "Countryside Churches" all looking to the "Mother Churches."

F. House Churches.

1. In many churches which are a part of the ICC it is customary to meet together as a whole on Sunday mornings and then split up into smaller groups on Sunday evening which meet in people's homes.
2. These smaller groups are referred to as "House Churches."



II. What Does The Bible Teach on These Ideas?

A. "Love Bombing."

1. While the Bible teaches personal involvement with people, Christians should make their intentions clear (Acts 26:26-29).

B. Discipling Partners.

1. Christians should help each other and confess to each other but this is never one sided (James 5:16).
2. Older Christians should teach the younger, but submission doesn't involve the surrender of individual choices (1 Peter 5:5).

C. Discipleship Baptism.

1. The Bible connects becoming a disciple of Jesus with all aspects of obedience to the gospel (Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 14:25-33).
2. This involves full submission to Christ, not a discipleship system or to another human being.

D. Pillar Churches.

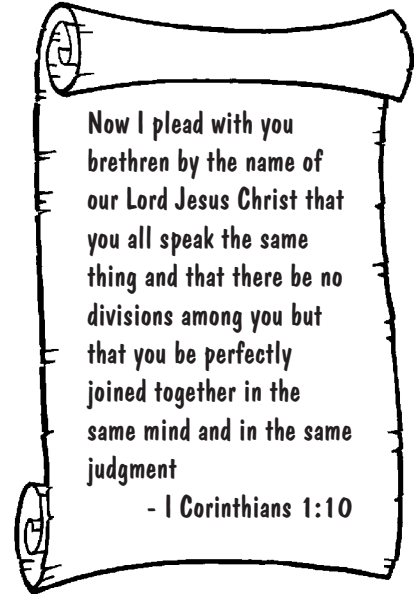
1. Christ is the sole head of the church (Ephesians 1:22-23).
2. Each congregations was led by the oversight of elders from among the congregation (Acts 14:23). There is no example of congregations being overseen by elders of another congregation.
3. The Bible teaches no concept of "Mother Churches." Note: The only thing that made Jerusalem unique was the fact that for a time the Apostles remained there (Acts 8:1; Ephesians 2:19-22). There are no modern day Apostles.

E. House Churches.

1. New Testament Christians studied together in one another's homes (Acts 20:20).
2. Congregations in the New Testament frequently assembled in people's homes (Romans 16:3-5; Colossians 4:15).
3. Is the term "church" a synonym for "Christians"?
 - a. Kittel understands references to the church in someone's home to mean the same things as references to the church in a given city (Vol. III, p. 506). Thayer, on the other hand, on the phrase "*the church in one's house*," writes - "i.e. the company of Christians belonging to a person's family; others less aptly understand the phrase of Christians accustomed to meet for worship in the house of someone..." (p. 196).
 - b. Given that the term *ecclesia* (see pg. 5) had a political and corporate sense in the ancient world, it is unlikely that it would be used for simply the Christians in one's family, especially given statements which make reference to restrictions "in the church" (see 1 Corinthians 11:18; 14:34). Paul frequently uses the word "saints" to refer to Christians irrespective of their connection to the assembly (see Acts 9:13, 32; Romans 16:2; 16:15; 1 Corinthians 14:33).

— Lesson Eleven: Divorce & Remarriage —

Introduction. Jesus' teachings on divorce and remarriage have always met with opposition from an immoral world. The extent to which the church becomes tolerant of such immorality is often reflected in tolerant attitudes towards divorce and remarriage. As divorce rates soared in the United States in the late twentieth century debates regarding divorce and remarriage became issues of division among brethren. One prominent debate involved the question of whether Christ's laws on the subject are binding upon the alien sinner.



I. Explanation of the Position.

- A. Those who argue that Christ's laws on divorce only apply to an individual after obedience to the gospel, contend that Jesus' teachings on the subject are intended to describe the character and behavior of those in a covenant relationship with God in Christ.
- B. As a result, if an individual has unscripturally divorced and remarried prior to conversion, it is argued that repentance does not demand that such remarriage constitutes committing adultery, and can be sustained.

II. What Does the Bible Say?

- A. Jesus' teachings on divorce and remarriage.
 1. Man must not separate what God has joined together (Matthew 19:4-6).
 2. All divorce and remarriage that is not for the cause of sexual immorality is adultery (Matthew 19:9; 5:31-32; Mark 10:11,12; Luke 16:18).
- B. Divorce and remarriage in the epistles of Paul.
 1. Those divorced must remain unmarried or be reconciled to their mate (1 Corinthians 7:10-11).
 2. Marriage to a non-Christian is equally binding (1 Corinthians 7:12-16).

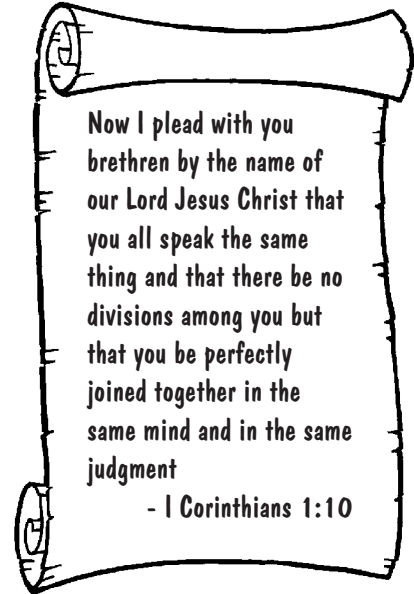
C. Questions to consider.

1. *Do the teachings of Jesus apply only to those in Christ?* (1 Corinthians 9:21). All are under law towards Christ.
2. *Are marriage laws binding upon those outside of Christ?* (Hebrews 13:4). Marriage is to honorable (i.e. to be held in honor) among all.
3. *Would God expect a person to end an unscriptural marriage as an act of repentance?* (Ezra 10:1-3). The example of the Israelites putting away their pagan wives, serves as an example of the fact that unlawful marriages can not be sustained.
4. *Wouldn't it violate Jesus' teachings on divorce to end such a relationship?* (Matthew 19:6). It is only sinful for God joined unions to be ended. God never joins two individuals who are unlawfully married.
5. *Is abandonment by a non-Christian spouse a second exception for divorce and remarriage?* The phrase "not under bondage" in 1 Corinthians 7:15 refers to the fact that if a non-Christian mate is unwilling to live with the Christian mate (see 7:12,13) the Christian's responsibility before God does not demand a slave-like obligation to hold to an unwilling partner. Nothing is said about the right to remarry. Christ's teachings on remarriage apply to this case just as they do to all others.
6. *How is an unbeliever "sanctified" by a marriage to a believer?* Under the Old Law the children born from unlawful unions were restricted from entering the congregation (Deuteronomy 23:2-8). Under the Law of Christ there is no such restriction.
7. *Does repentance demand ending an unlawful marriage?* (Luke 3:10-14). Repentance always demands that a person stop doing what is wrong and start doing what is right.

Conclusion. In spite of how the world around us turns away from the Lord's teachings on the permanence of marriage we must hold to Jesus' clear teachings. While repentance is never an easy thing, we must never compromise Jesus' message for the sake of winning souls who are unwilling to take the difficult steps which repentance demands.

— Lesson Twelve: The Nature of Christ —

Introduction. From the early history of the church there have been serious debates and controversies over the nature of Jesus. In the twentieth century some brethren wrestled with some of these same issues concerning the nature (or degree) of Christ's Deity. At issue is the question of whether in coming to earth Jesus fully divested Himself of Deity or did He consistently maintain His Divine nature.



I. Explanation of the Position.

- A. Those who argue that Jesus did completely surrender His divine nature appeal to two points in defense of this position:
1. Paul declares in Philippians 2:7 that Jesus "emptied Himself" (ASV, NASB) in order to take the form of man. Gr. *kenoo* (κενόω) meaning, "to empty, make empty; to make void" (Thayer, p. 344).
 2. The Hebrew writer states that Jesus was "in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).
- B. It is argued that when Jesus is said to have "emptied Himself" the text is teaching that He surrendered His Deity in order to become fully human.
- C. Further, it is argued that if Jesus had not fully surrendered His Deity, then He would not in fact be truly tempted "as we are" but instead would have had an unfair advantage in overcoming sin.

II. What Does The Bible Say?

- A. Jesus was (and is) God.
1. "The Word was God" (John 1:1-3).
 2. "Mighty God" (Isaiah 9:6,7).
 3. "Before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:53-58). In using this designation for Himself, which God had used in speaking to Moses (Exodus 3:13,14), He not only indicated His existence prior to Abraham, but His present Deity.
 3. "My Lord and My God" (John 20:24-29).
 4. "God was manifested in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16, KJV, NKJV).

Note: This is a disputed reading. ASV & NASB have “He was manifested.” There is evidence in support of both readings. In some mss. it is a matter of determining if the text reads OC “He” or \Theta C the *nomen sacrum* (abbreviated name for “God”).

5. “He is the image of the invisible God.” (Colossians 1:15-17). Jesus is not visible to man now, so this must indicate that Jesus displayed the invisible God while He was visible. This would only be true if He was divine while visible.
6. “In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” (Colossians 2:8-10).

B. Jesus was fully human.

1. “The Word became flesh.” (John 1:14; see also I John 4:1,2).
2. He shared our flesh and blood (Hebrews 2:15,16).
3. He was made like us in all things (Hebrews 2:17).
4. “The Man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5-7). What Jesus accomplished by becoming flesh, in order to act as a Mediator for mankind, is sustained in heaven (see Hebrews 7:25-27). Scripture does not fully explain whether this means that Jesus retained some aspect of His humanity, or simply (having become flesh) earned the right to stand as Mediator.

C. Points to Consider.

1. We have seen above that Scripture indicates that Jesus was Divine upon becoming flesh (John 1:1); while on the earth prior to His death (John 8:58); after His resurrection (John 20:28) and in His present exalted state (Colossians 2:9).
2. We have seen also that Scripture indicates that Jesus was human while on the earth, and retains His function as a Mediator for man in heaven.
3. The phrase “emptied Himself” indicates the honor that Jesus denied Himself when He left heaven and lived as the creature rather than the creator.
4. It is clear that Jesus suffered when He faced temptation (see Hebrews 2:18; 5:8). It is equally clear that Jesus did not sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). It was not necessary for Jesus to be ignorant of His Divine nature, or divested of it entirely for Him to be perfected as the sinless offering for sin and a suitable High Priest for mankind (see Hebrews 5:5-9).



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