

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

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THE ANCIENT LANDMARKS

Barry O'Dell

Five times in the Old Testament the word *landmark* is used. The word means, "a border, boundary, or territory." Deuteronomy 19:14 and 27:17 are prohibitions written in the Law of Moses about Israelites moving the borders of another's inheritance in the Promised Land. Proverbs 22:28 and 23:10 are similar commands written several hundred years later. Job 24:2 is a part of Job's defense of his innocence in view of his suffering. He was "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed (turned away from) evil" (Job 1:1). He said of others, "Some remove the *landmarks*; they violently take away flocks, and feed thereof" (Job 24:2). It is obvious from these five passages that God expected people to respect the property of others.

The concept of borders or *landmarks* is also present in the New Testament in a metaphorical way. The apostle John wrote, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9). The word for *transgress* is similar to our English word *trespass*. The word in the Greek language (*parabaino*) means, "to go by the side of; to pass or pass over; to overstep or trespass." While the five passages listed above from the Old Testament refer to literal, physical property lines, John spoke of abiding or remaining "in the doctrine of Christ." There was a line that was not to be crossed! In the immediate context, John was warning about those who "confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" (2 Jn. 7). He called those who do such "a deceiver and an antichrist." There are other lines that are not to be crossed according to the New Testament.

Salvation. The gospel is very clear and easy to understand when it comes to being saved from sin. Jesus was very specific (Mk. 16:16). Peter was very specific (Acts 2:37-38). Philip was very specific (Acts 8:35-38). Paul was very specific (Gal. 3:26-28). God has drawn a boundary in terms of man being saved from his sin and we have no right to *go beyond* or *trespass* in this realm.

Marriage. From the beginning God determined that the home was to be established upon a man leaving his parents and cleaving to his wife (Gen. 2:24). When questioned about divorce for "any reason" Jesus responded "from the beginning it was not so" (Matt. 19:3, 8). God's intent for marriage is one man and one woman, for life. As

with salvation, however, mankind has *gone beyond* or *trespassed* against God's plan for marriage in a variety of ways.

Worship. From the beginning (Gen. 4) man has attempted to "improve" or change God's plan for worship. Hebrews 11:4 gives a view into what happened with Cain and Abel as recorded in Genesis 4. Abel offered by faith and his sacrifice was "more excellent" to God than his brother's. The implication is obvious – God, at some point in time, had revealed what He wanted as sacrifice. Abel obeyed and Cain did not. First Kings 12 is another example of man altering God's specified worship. Jeroboam, a servant of Solomon, helped to split the Kingdom of Israel and established new locations, objects, and time for worship in Israel. The record states of Jeroboam, "...who did sin, and who made Israel to sin" (1 Kg. 14:16). There has never been a time in history when man was permitted to change God's plan for worship. Men today tamper with God's plan in various ways. Women leading in the assembly, which is a violation of Paul's command is an example (1 Tim. 2:8-14). Musical instruments, which is a violation of

the commands and examples found in the New Testament is another example (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 13:15). The list could go on, but the point is clear.

The behavior of individual Christians. God had set boundaries that His children are not to cross in terms of their conduct. Our conduct should "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things" (Titus 2:10). In Ephesians 4:25-32 we read of several lines that are not to be crossed by those who have put on the new man. Mankind does not have the right to make his own determination concerning his daily conduct!

The admonition to not remove the *ancient landmarks* in spiritual matters is just as important as the command under the Old Testament that referred to physical property lines in Israel. Fulton County Gospel News, for 64 years, has been dedicated to sharing the pure and simple gospel of Jesus Christ to the local area and around the world. In this, the 65th year, each edition of the paper will contain one or more article from past authors and editors. God's truth does not change and things that were true in 1953 are still true today! The church of Christ in Mammoth Spring, under the oversight of our elders, send out this paper with hopes that it will encourage you and help you as you grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

"Remove not the ancient landmark"
Proverbs 22:28

MORALITY IS NOT ENOUGH

Arvey Powell - March 1953 FCGN

Our Savior said, "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). This rock is the fact that He is the Son of God. He built His church upon that rock. The apostle Paul said of Jesus, "And He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead" (Col. 1:18). Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it (Eph. 5:25). It (the church) is to be presented unto Him "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:27).

Since there is no salvation except in Christ, to be in Him is to be in His body, the church. A redeemed person is one who has been "baptized into Christ" (Gal. 3:27). Oftentimes men outside the church are as good morally as genuine Christians, but morality alone will not suffice. Morality must be combined with spirituality to be saved in Christ and to provide any promise of eternal life with Him.

OBLIGATIONS OF PERSONAL EVANGELISM

Lester Martin - January 1953 FCGN

It is not only a high privilege but an important obligation to engage in personal work. Christ commanded it. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:19-20). Hence, the command to the Christian is "go," and the command to the sinner is "come" (Matt. 11:28-30).

Christianity is a teaching religion, and as such it appeals to the understanding as well as the emotions of man. No one can come to God until he has a knowledge of how to come.

The process of salvation, of becoming a Christian, is not one of accident or chance. The will of God must be known by the sinner before he can intelligently obey its provisions and accept its promises. But, these things cannot be known until they are revealed by some qualified source. Hence, the great need of personal workers in the kingdom of God at all times.

The plan and will of God is that the teacher of His word and the untaught be brought into personal contact with each other for the express purpose of

teaching and being taught the way of life and salvation. This is true in every recorded instance of conversion in Acts of the Apostles.

THE ORIGIN OF THE BIBLE

Wayne Jackson - February 1993 FCGN

One of the best known laws of the universe is the law of cause and effect. Simply stated, it is this: every effect must have an adequate cause. Now let this law be applied to the Bible. The Bible is an effect. It was caused by some source. Really, there are but two possibilities: (a) The Bible originated from a purely human source; or, (b) The Bible, while employing human writers, is nevertheless ultimately of divine origin. How can one determine which of these views is correct? The only way is to examine the Bible itself and see whether or not it bears those marks of identification which would be expected of a book that originated with God. What would be expected of a divine volume?

(1) If God gave the Bible, we would expect Him to tell us so. The fact is, the Bible claims to be the word of God literally thousands of times (Jer. 1:9; Acts 1:16), and Christ Himself endorsed this very view of Scripture (Matt. 22:31).

(2) If God is the source of the Bible, since He is perfect (Matt. 5:48), and not the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33), we would expect it to be perfectly harmonious. Though composed over sixteen centuries, the Scriptures are perfectly harmonious. While some have charged the Bible with contradictions, such an allegation will not stand.

(3) Since God is holy (Isa. 6:3), we would expect the Bible to have an exalted moral tone. That is exactly what one finds. Its precepts - "love your neighbor as yourself" - and "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Matt. 22:39; 7:12), have amazed millions of people down through the ages. No philosophy can boast of such morals.

(4) If the Bible is from God, we would not expect that any group of men, regardless of their genius, could produce a volume that would surpass that ancient document. Though the Scriptures have been completed for almost nineteen centuries, no one has been able to author a book that would make the Bible obsolete. This is inexplicable!

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(5) If the Bible is from the timeless God, we would expect it to be perpetually relevant. This is the case. Other books are shortly outdated, but the Bible is as fresh and up-to-date as when it came from the pens of the inspired writers.

(6) If the Bible were of divine origin, we would expect it to accurately portray the character of man. This is exactly what it does. Though man was created upright in God's own image (Gen. 1:26), by sin he has progressively separated himself from his Maker (Isa. 59:1-2). He has become exceedingly corrupt (Jer. 17:9), and hence stands in dire need of help. Man could not have authored the Bible if he would, and would not have penned it if he could!

(7) Finally, if the Bible is of God, we would not expect it to be simply a vague philosophical and abstract treatise, but rather, to give specific information of what man's purpose is and how he may achieve that purpose. Thrillingly, the Bible reveals that man's purpose on earth is to serve God (Isa. 43:7; Ecc. 12:13). It reveals the mission of Christ to save man from his wickedness (Lk. 19:10), and urges us to be responsive to His redeeming message of grace (Heb. 5:8-9; Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38). Let us hear its message.

rule to the world. In His advice to a rich, young ruler He stated, "Honor thy father and thy mother: and, thou shalt love thine neighbor as thyself" (Matt. 19:19). In the sermon on the mount Christ said, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matt. 5:43-44).

We need to train ourselves to love all mankind. Love is the most important single thing in living for God. Paul stated in his letter to the church at Corinth, "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Cor. 13:13). The happiest people in the world are those who heed the advice of Jesus and give of their time to help others. All of us have experienced in small ways the feelings we get when we help someone. The joy we receive from helping others is one of the finer things of life, thus we realize what Jesus meant when He said it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). Developing the proper love for all will be easier if we begin early in life.

YOUTH AND CHRISTIANITY

Clovis Ragsdale - November 1955 FCGN

Although young people seldom realize it, the habits and attitudes of our early years generally form our character for the remainder of our lives. This is why youth need to think seriously about God and His teachings. Studying the Bible is a habit we should form very early in life. If we form a routine in our lives which includes time for study and meditation on spiritual matters, the chances are good that we will live close to God all the years of our lives. A youth spent in sin and an indifferent attitude toward religion makes it harder in later years to change to serving the Lord. Very few young people who attend worship services every Sunday, and who are serious in their intentions, ever become worldly or weak in later years. Youth need to develop a strong opposition to the sins which are most tempting such as jealousy, envy, fornication, revelry, etc. the attitude we form early in life will determine if we are able to say no to these many temptations.

Our attitude towards others is very important in Christian living, too. Jesus Christ introduced a new

THANK YOU!

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Sincerely,

Barry O'Dell - Editor

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Biblical Worship

- Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-24)
 - Prayer (Acts 12:5; Phil. 4:6-7)
- Vocal music only (Eph. 5:19; Heb. 13:15)
 - Giving (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:7-8)
 - Preaching (Acts 2:42; 20:7)

The Churches of Christ

- Bible only (Rom. 1:16; 2 Pet. 1:3)
 - Name (Rom. 16:16)
- Began in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3; Acts 2:1-4)
 - Established by Jesus (Matt. 16:18)
- Purchased with Jesus' blood (Acts 20:28)
- Established in the 1st century (Acts 2:47)
- Body of Christ and Christ alone is the Head and Savior (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23)
- Added to the church today just as in the 1st century (Acts 2:41, 47; 1 Cor. 12:13)

Salvation

- Belief and baptism (Mk. 16:16)
- Repentance and baptism (Acts 2:37-38)
- Belief, confession, and baptism (Acts 8:37-38)
 - Hear, belief, baptism (Acts 18:8)
 - Faith and baptism (Gal. 3:26-27)
 - Baptism does save us (1 Pet. 3:21)

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