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"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)

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A MORAL PERSPECTIVE

The moral decay of our country is all too obvious. One need only to pick up the newspaper, or turn on the television or radio, to understand just how morally bankrupt this country and most of its citizens have become. Most people who have reached the milestone of being "middle-aged" know quite well the number of changes which have taken place in the last few decades.

Prayer has been banned in schools and in most other public venues. Anything which

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carries a religious connotation cannot be part of anything which is supported by taxpayer dollars. Things have went well beyond the idea of separation of church and state, to a point where it is now a separation of God and country.

The national sentiment of removing God from public life is not the problem, but merely a symptom. A symptom of God being removed from the lives of individuals and families. In this century materialism and hedonism have replaced faith and values of the last century.

It would be bad enough if this moral cancer was confined to the world, but we know all too well that it isn't. Many in the Lord's Church have fallen prey to Satan's spell as well. This has happened in many ways, but there is one in particular that has had a devastating effect of many congregations and families -- divorce and remarriage.

Over and over this subject has been debated. Arguments have been made over and over until most veterans of the controversy know them by heart. It would avail little here to rehash the old arguments which most have already heard so many times. Rather than talking about WHAT the Bible says on the subject, I want to endeavor to try to add a new dimension to the issue. I want to talk about WHY God's commandment is what it is.

Over and over I have heard those who advocate divorce and remarriage lean on

one purely emotional plea. They argue that certainly a loving God would not expect the "innocent party" in a case of marital infidelity to remain unmarried and suffer because of their partner's sinful behavior. They argue that, for instance, if a married man runs off with another woman, his wife should have the right to divorce him and marry again, and not be forced to remain celibate for the rest of her life.

But regardless of how this may touch our hearts we must realize that the Bible teaches one man for one woman for life -- no exceptions. And there is a very logical reason why the Bible teaches this. Today roughly half of all marriages will end in divorce. One hundred years ago divorce was almost unheard of. What happened? It has nothing to do with the quality of marriages and everything to do with people's attitudes.

Recently I was talking with a sister in a small rural community about the proliferation of immorality. In this community sexual immorality of all types is rampant. Divorce and remarriage has almost reached epidemic proportions. This sister told me that when she was growing up there was only one divorced woman in the whole community. And this woman was treated as an outcast.

Back when the Bible was honored and divorce was not only considered sinful but also shameful, people made their marriages work. Today most young people go into marriage with the idea that if it

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doesn't work they'll just try again. And because most people aren't willing to work through their problems, which just about all marriages will face, then most are doomed to failure from the start.

It has only been a short time since divorce and remarriage became socially acceptable and already it has our society on its knees on the verge of collapse. Divorce and remarriage attacks the very fabric of our society -- the family.

If the Lord were here to personally judge every case there might indeed be instances where He would permit a person to divorce and remarry. But most of the time I am certain He would simply tell them to work it out. The reason that the Lord, in His infinite wisdom, made no provision for divorce and remarriage whatsoever, is that He knew it would be abused and that soon anyone who felt like it would be getting a divorce. This would then quickly lead to the collapse of society and the Church.

The Lord is not cruel in asking the "innocent party" to remain unmarried.

That person must make a sacrifice for the good of the Church and the good of mankind. As long as divorce was almost nonexistent the family was strong. As a result society, the nation, and the Church flourished. But in the last few decades since divorce has become accepted and commonplace ... well, just look at the mess we're in!

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SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Who incited David to take a census of Israel?
2. How many times did Jesus ask Peter, "Lovest thou me?" in John 21?
3. What did Paul not cease doing after he heard about the faith of the saints of Ephesus?
4. Which of the following is the king who destroyed Judah and Israel during Jeremiah's time: Zedekiah, Nebuchadnezzar, or Zebek?
5. What was "flowing" in the promised land of Canaan?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH ...

and remember last month's questions?

1. Who was the father of Benammi and Moab? LOT (Gen. 19:37,38)

2. Where did Jacob position himself in his caravan as he approached Esau for a reconciliation? THE REAR (Gen. 32:18)

3. To what village were two disciples going on resurrection Sunday when they were joined by Jesus? EMMAUS (Lk. 24:13)

4. What did David say he panted for as the deer pants for water? GOD (Psa. 42:1)

5. What two Biblical writers wrote from prison (or a dungeon)? PAUL (Eph. 3:1; 4:1) AND JEREMIAH (Jer. 37:16)

THE LAZY MAN'S FIELD

In the book of Proverbs Solomon tells us about an interesting lesson he learned. "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction." (Prov. 24:30-32)

Evidently one day Solomon decided to take a walk and happened to pass by the property of a lazy man. Whether Solomon personally knew the owner is of little consequence because he could easily see the results of this man's attitude: a land overgrown with thorns and a broken down wall. Obviously it belonged to a

slothful man. The lesson, then, is that what people see in our "spiritual" backyard (or lives) tells a lot about the sort of people we really are. If we are lazy in spiritual matters, then it will definitely show up in our cluttered and broken down lives! When we neglect to obey the commandments of God, it is usually because we are slothful and slow to act.

We can also apply this lesson to our congregations. If we took a stroll, what would we see? What would the world see? Would they see a congregation "going to waste" or in hibernation? Would they see tall weeds and a broken-down structure and get a favorable impression of the churches of our Lord? True, you should not judge a book by its cover but let's face it, people do. And Solomon mentioned that it does say something about the person himself.

Does the world see church members who are spiritually lazy or indifferent in church matters? Are we apathetic (just don't care!), maybe lukewarm about the Lord's commandments? Does the world see us compromise God's Word? Do they see a "lazy man's field"? Imagine what all of this says about who we really are and about our true attitudes.

It is never too late to take corrective measures while we are still alive. Each one of us could probably do a little "extra" work in the Lord's church, couldn't we? But let us not wait until

(continued next page)

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE & TIME</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
May 2 - 4	Antioch Church Livingston, TN	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
May 2 - 4	Rainsville, AL	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
May 5 - 9	Chestnut Grove Church Parksville, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
May 19 - 23	Hopkinsville, OH	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
May 30 - - June 1	New Bethel Church Cullman, AL	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)

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last minute. Then it will be too late. We should use our God-given talents to the fullest, whether we can lead a song or a prayer, whether we can preach the Truth and spread the Gospel, whether we can visit the sick and the fatherless, whether we can edify and encourage the brethren, whether we can supply financial support to others, etc. There is so much we can do. If we will only step up our efforts, the world can see an influential and prosperous church. *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."* (Matt. 5:16)

RAY