



“Re-digging Old Wells”

Part I

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Today, much of our water comes from reservoirs, but many communities still depend upon wells. Many rural homes still get their water from wells dug on their properties. Back in old times, wells were even more vital to community life and physical life itself. Our text for today’s lesson comes from the book of **Genesis**.

Genesis 26:17-18 “And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there. And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.”

There is a very timely lesson in those words for us today. This event happened in the valley of Gerar in the land of Abimelech, the king of the Philistines. Isaac’s father, Abraham, had once been there, but years later when Isaac came to this same land, he didn’t find it in the condition that his father had left it. Abraham’s servants had once dug wells there, but the Philistines came along after Abraham died and stopped those wells, filling them with earth. Since Isaac and his cattle needed water, the Bible says that he *dug again the wells of water* that had been dug in the days of Abraham.

We all know that water is essential to life. Without it, we will die. One time, Jesus compared His doctrine to water. He stopped at Jacob’s well at about noon time. The Lord was tired and thirsty. Along came a Samaritan woman, and He asked for her to draw water from the well for Him to drink. She found it strange that a Jew would ask a Samaritan for a drink. She certainly didn’t recognize Him as being the Christ, so Jesus used His request to teach a great lesson there, not only about who He was, but about the salvation that He came to earth to bring.

John 4:13-14 “Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

On another occasion, Jesus stood and cried, *If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink (John 7:37)*. This *living, spiritual water* that Jesus spoke of is just as essential to spiritual life as physical water is to physical life; without it, there can be no spiritual life. But, sometimes wells of physical water become filled with dirt and debris. Their walls may cave, they may become stopped with earth or clogged with rubbish. They may become filled in. In the same way, the well of living water, of salvation, of pure Bible truth can become obstructed and polluted. When that happens, they have to be cleaned out or dug again. What are some of the wells that need to be re-dug today?

It didn't take long after the gospel was first preached by the apostles—in fact, while the sacred scriptures were being originally written down by the apostles and prophets of the first century, already the word of truth was being obstructed. The water was being polluted by men who soon went astray from the gospel that was first preached to them.

Galatians 1:6-7 “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.”

The word *pervert* here means *to transform a thing into something else; to corrupt something*. How is water corrupted? How can we pervert water? It's corrupted when something is added to it. Thus, tainting it or changing it. If you drop tea leaves into a cup of pure water, it ceases being pure water and becomes tea. It might have water in it, but now it is changed to something else. As good as that tea may taste, the fact is it is no longer pure water. It has been transformed.

Through the ages, there have been many, many things added to the well of truth that have transformed the living water of Christ into a strange concoction of divine truth mixed with human tradition and practice. The problem is, when you do that, you no longer have divine truth. You have transformed it into something else.

As Paul penned this letter to the Galatian church, he was already seeing the corruption of the gospel, or the stopping of the Lord's well as it were, with the doctrines of the Judaizing teachers. In other words, there were false teachers who had not learned the difference between the old law and the gospel. There are multitudes of people in the same condition today. These men of whom Paul was warning the church were corrupting the gospel by telling new believers that they had to go back and keep the Mosaic law in addition to obedience of the gospel in order to be saved. This is one of the things that made their doctrine so deceptive. They weren't telling people that they *shouldn't* believe in Jesus. They weren't telling people that it wasn't *necessary* to obey the gospel. But what they were doing was seeking to go back and bind the law of Moses upon Christian believers in addition to the gospel. In other words, it was not enough that they had placed their faith in Christ and been baptized into Christ (**Galatians 3:26-27**) and that they were now living for Him. They also had to go back and live for Moses and carefully keep the commandments of Moses—especially circumcision, as God had long required of the Jews since He made the first covenant with them. The result was that Christians who were now supposed to be free from the entanglements of that old law that resulted in sin and condemnation, were now being brought back into bondage to it.

This was a great crisis in the early church, especially in the church of Galatia to whom Paul is now writing. Therefore, Paul pointedly dealt with their error and was working to unstop the well that had become clogged by their false doctrine.

Galatians 2:16 “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law (talking about the law of Moses), but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law (speaking again of the law of Moses) shall no flesh be justified.”

He continues in **verse 21**.

Galatians 2:21 “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law (the law of Moses), then Christ is dead in vain.”

Jesus would not have needed to die if we could’ve been justified and saved by keeping the Mosaic Law.

Galatians 4:9-11 “But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements (of the Mosaic economy), whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.”

They were being told to keep the old feasts and ceremonies, and observe the Sabbaths and other days and times that were considered holy by the Jews living under the law. Paul clearly says that the gospel frees men from their obligation to the old law, and to go back to those things was to make the preaching of the gospel vain and meaningless.

There are still many today who look to the Old Testament law for their worship, for their rule of living. In fact, many things that we see in supposed Christianity today are directly borrowed from the Old Testament system. There is Sabbath keeping, for example. Even though Paul said:

Colossians 2:14 “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;”

Colossians 2:16-17 “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.”

What he is referring to when he mentions meat and drink and these various holy days, the Sabbath days and so forth, are the dietary restrictions of the Old Testament law. He’s talking about the days that were sacred to the Jewish people. He says those things were temporary, they were a shadow of things that were later to come, not the real thing. The body, he says—the reality that cast the shadow—is Christ. So, Paul tells them not to let men come along and judge them in all of these various things that pertain to that former system that was a shadow of that which they now enjoyed in Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul continually had to dig out and unstop the wells that were being clogged by the false doctrines of these Judaizers.

I think Paul would have to do the same thing if he were yet with us today. There are many things in religion today that are borrowed from the Old Testament system; for example, the concept of a separate and distinct priesthood in the church, apart from the priesthood of every believer. Some also

make a distinction between clergy and laity. That is taken directly from the Old Testament model of a special priesthood distinct from all other people.

Now, preaching is a servant's work within the church. A man who preaches the gospel does a particular work that he possesses the ability to do and that he has been appointed by the church to do. He certainly does not stand between you and God. He is not a go-between or an intercessor for you. He does not serve as a priest on your behalf. ALL Christians, ALL baptized believers in this economy become priests unto God. The idea that a man can absolve your sins, that he has that kind of authority when you confess your sins to him, or that he stands between you and God, hearkens to a system that is now obsolete and done away with in the church.

Revelation 1:6 "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

I Corinthians 1:2 "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:"

There is no classification or spiritual hierarchy of men among the church of Christ.

Then, there is the worship of the Old Testament that is so often borrowed and employed by the supposed New Testament churches of today such as instrumental music. Mechanical instruments were unknown to the early church for nearly 600 years after Jesus established the church. For nearly six centuries, those who claimed to follow Jesus Christ did not use them in corporate worship. They are not commanded, nor are they spoken of in reference to Christian worship anywhere in the New Testament. If one wants to find scriptural precedent for them, he would have to go all the way back to the temple worship of the Old Testament. You see, the well has become clogged with the practices of Judaism and it needs to be re-dug by simply using the church that was established by Christ in the first century as our paradigm, as our only model and guide.

But that wasn't the only well that became clogged with human doctrine and tradition. The apostles also had to clean out and re-dig the wells that were filled with paganism. This was particularly the case with the church located in the evil, profligate city of Corinth. These Christians had been converted out of idolatry and heathenism, and the result was that many of them, being immature in their faith, were holding on to some of their idolatrous ways. It was very difficult to eradicate this church in Corinth of the influences of the Gentile, pagan society that surrounded them. Sexual immorality was a problem in the church at Corinth, just like it was in the city of Corinth. In fact, we can read in **I Corinthians 5** where a man had become guilty of a sexual sin that was not even common among the Gentile people, Paul says. But Paul had to deal with this sin that had reared its ugly head in the Corinthian church because it was such a prominent part of the culture in the city of Corinth. Those who lived in Corinth thought nothing of sexual immorality. Paul told them not only to withdraw from the man who was living in sin with his stepmother (**chapter 5**), but he also warned the other believers in this way:

I Corinthians 6:9-11 "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are

washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

And such were some of you: but... Christians were cleansed of such unrighteousness when they obeyed the gospel. Now, being sanctified, they were to live clean and consecrated lives. But in the same way the evil of the time affected the church at Corinth, the immorality and paganism that has saturated our culture today finds its way into the church from time to time. And you know what? We have to clean out and re-dig the ancient well of truth.

The modern church is facing a moral and a spiritual crisis today of worldliness and worldly conformity. The influences of a lewd and pagan culture have had a devastating effect on the American church today, including those who profess to follow Jesus Christ, in many ways that most of us don't even realize. Many of the religious practices, ceremonies, even the holidays that we get caught up in are directly taken from idolatrous practices.

When Paul wrote to this same church a second time, he said this:

II Corinthians 6:16-18 “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

You see, the wells of truth need to be re-dug. The church needs to come out from the world and be separate and holy. But you hear very little today about true sanctification and holiness in the American pulpit. We've even seen an effort to assimilate the church to the culture to the point today where the message of Christianity has become totally compromised, watered down and ineffectual in the lives of multitudes of people.

Listen: it is time that those who seek to honor the Lord Jesus Christ and be faithful to Him come out from the world and be separate, like the apostle Paul says. To lead holy lives and start shining as a light in this sin-darkened world instead of being its reflection!

It wasn't just the paganism and lasciviousness that was prevalent in Corinth. It was that way in the entire Roman empire. As Christianity spread throughout Asia Minor and Europe, it encountered the people of this pagan empire, and over time, the influence of Rome began to mingle with the truth of Jerusalem until a complete apostasy took place. Over hundreds of years, a false religion emerged that continues, consequently, to cover the earth and spread its influence today.

II Thessalonians 2:7 “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.”

He said the *mystery of iniquity* was already at work. When he visited the church in Ephesus for the last time, they had a tearful meeting and farewell with Paul, as he left them with this ominous warning:

Acts 20:28-32 “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in

among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”

This is, indeed, what happened. Whatever Paul was immediately referring to in this speech, we know that it was only a short time until some elders and leaders in the church did, in fact, begin to exalt themselves over others, and an unscriptural hierarchy emerged that completely led the church away from the truth and from its original design.

Lord willing, we will continue our study next week and talk about the wells today that need to be re-dug.

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