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THE REVIEW

Is 1 John 2:15-16 Obsolete?

By Dr. Robert Payne, Moderator



During the last decade dramatic changes and shifts within fundamentalism have become patently obvious.¹ Activities, attitudes, and standards of modesty and propriety, once considered “worldly” by those who take the Word of God seriously, have now gone mainstream in “fundamentalism.” Even the list of “questionable” areas, many of which were considered sinful some years ago, is growing by leaps and bounds. Dr. Robert Delnay, a friend, and one of our own faithful IBFNA men, wrote in 1996: “...people old enough to remember must agree that a great shift has taken place. It is as if the old standards were once on the table, and now the table top has tilted, and everything has slid off.”²

I have found that by simply questioning whether something is worldly raises the ire of many fundamentalists. If 1 John 2:15-16 is applied to some situation, many respond with, “So you are using that old, worn-out worldliness argument again, aren’t you?”

These shifts in fundamentalism have prompted me to ask some questions: Is 1 John 2:15-16 obsolete? Does *anything* fit into the category of what is “worldly” anymore? Does *anything go* among believers? Dr. Delnay’s experience parallels my own observations: “Not long ago as two pastors were in conversation one asked the other if he could think of any practice not specifically forbidden in the Bible, that we avoid simply because it is worldly. Neither could think of one. We have come a long way.”³

So, does this passage in John’s first epistle have any relevance whatsoever to standards of modesty, attitudes of covetousness, styles of music, attendance at movie theaters, dancing, drinking of alcoholic beverages, or loose relationships with the opposite sex? You wouldn’t think so the way some fundamentalists talk. No one is denying that 1 John 2:15-16 has been seriously misapplied by some through the years, but what I have found disturbing is the all-too-common attitude of some that seems to say, “Forget the meaning and application of the text because I *like* what I am doing.” At the heart of this attitude is a self-centeredness and, at the very least, a misapprehension of the holiness of God.

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“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world...”



On Preaching

by Dr. Robert Delnay

Preaching fashions change. The standard Puritan message drew on a text and had three divisions: the meaning, the doctrines, the uses. Since about Edwards' time, the sermon began with a verse or two and then developed topically. During the 1800's the standard was textual, and in more recent decades it had to be alliterated, maybe even the subheads. Since then you heard expository sermons, drawing in a paragraph or a chapter.

Now the fashion leans toward narrative sermons, a whole sermon to tell and maybe apply a Bible story. It may even convey some doctrine. Even more often these days, however, you hear the sword drill sermon, during which the preacher leads you all over, as you look up other verses he found. Some few can do this well; then there are all the rest of us.

Preacher, have a heart. Kindly preach one passage to us, and then when the service ends we won't wonder what you had in mind. If you need to refer to other passages, just quote them to us or read them to us. But please don't break our line of thought by making us look up the other verses you found.

How about this approach?

1. **Take the principal passage.** If you have a burden from the Lord, there are probably many verses or chapters that deal with it. Find the one that most completely embodies what you need to say. Then study it. Pray over it. Reflect on it. Seek out the supporting ideas in the passage that help develop it.

Ask the passage what one decision it demands, not that you end up with moralizing alone or with a scold. You are asking what decision the passage requires, and you will finish your message by bringing it to bear on our conscience. But preach the Word.

2. **Then deal with those other passages.** You saw them as important? There is probably a way to include them in your sermon, but without breaking our attention by having us turn to them. Quote them to us, or summarize them, or sometimes read them. Illustrate them, or let them suggest illustrations. But by all means, teach us the one passage; make it memorable.

But somebody will object that the other passage is the key to what they need to know to resolve the leading passage. All right. Tell us what you are going to do.

Build up to it. Have us put a bookmark in the leading passage and then turn where you want us, and point us to the significance we need to grasp. Then when you finish that, take us back to the leading passage. You won't do that every sermon, but at least you don't lose us after the sixth or seventh verse we were supposed to turn to.

3. **Organize it.** Usually the passage itself will suggest the divisions by which you develop your message. The proposition states the decision it asks for. Then the passage suggests the reasons for doing it, or else the steps or ways to do it. You need the outline the way your body needs your skeleton.

4. **Communicate it.** Talk directly to us. In your study read Matt. 5-7, and count the times the Lord said "You." Note how He did it. Note how He put it in terms of their interest. It gets easier to do that the more you work at it.

Illustrate it. As you look at the ideas in the passage, and then the ideas to develop them, you will think of ways to illustrate them. If your stories don't fit, wait for other ones to come to mind.

Apply it. After the Puritans finished the meaning and the doctrines in a text, they would offer as many as ten or fifteen "Uses." Their earnest hearers took notes. Ours may not follow us that closely; and one clear application may be enough, especially if we have been working toward it for the last 25 minutes.

Plead it. When you feel something keenly, that concern is bound to show itself in your tone, your demeanor, your body language. How can a man urge on people the unsearchable riches of Christ in a calm, flat voice? Not that we are to work up emotion; we have endured enough of worked-up emotion. I read the phrase, "The heart-burdened tones of the messenger of the cross." Or as a noted writer put it, he may resist your arguments; he cannot resist your tears. Does the message mean enough to us that we can sincerely plead with sinners to accept it?

Now to this point this article has majored on the mechanics of sermon preparation. But you see the problem. We are not called to be mechanics; we are called to be men of God (I Peter 5:1-4, II Tim. 3:17) Maybe someone has painted across the back of your pulpit, "Sir, we would see Jesus." That request means what you can already summarize: a life of faith, a walk with Him, daily quiet time, deep confession of sin—spiritual exercises that were never popular, but needed among pastors if the saints are ever to learn them. Their love of fun in no way frees us from the duty of meeting God over our sermons. There is a famine in the land. Preach the Word!

1 John 2:15,16 (Continued from page 1)

So, what is the solution to this slighting of worldliness in our ranks? We need to return to the principle of *biblical authority*. We need once again to ask the question, “What saith the scripture?” God’s Word deals with each one of these modern issues either by direct commandment or by principle. Furthermore, we need to stop deciding what is right or wrong based on what we “like,” and return to asking the question, “Does it please the Lord?” (Eph. 5:10). Additionally, we need to ask ourselves why previous generations of godlier, more spiritually prosperous men and women rejected some of the things that fundamentalists feel free to participate in

today.⁴ Finally, the immature question “What’s wrong with it?” needs to be replaced with “Does it glorify God?” (1 Cor. 10:31).

I believe that unless we as fundamentalists begin to honestly face the worldliness in our midst in the light of the Word of God, that within a generation the unsaved world will no longer be able to distinguish an unsaved person from a Christian. In that day, the fundamentalists’ verbal witness will be ineffective, and the lost will no longer be able to distinguish between saved and unsaved. Like identical twins, both will be wearing the same matching worldly garb.

(Footnotes)

- ¹ Although the changes themselves have gradually taken place over the course of many decades.
- ² Robert G. Delnay, “What Became of Personal Separation?” *Faith Pulpit*, January 1996. Retrieved October 5, 2009, from http://www.faith.edu/seminary/faithpulpit.php?article=/faithpulpit/1996_01. I highly recommend this excellent article.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Notice the principle presented in Heb. 13:7.



Kingdom Theology

By Dr. Clay Nuttall

Missionary with Baptists Equipping Nationals

Fifty years ago when I began my theological education, kingdom theology was being hotly debated. The center of the discussion was about the liberal views being espoused on the subject. Statements like “building the kingdom” and “growing the kingdom” appeared frequently. Today these statements can be heard from fundamental pulpits. Such confusing terminology in this context should not be ignored.

Something is happening in our circles. It may be the unacceptable influence of reformed theology or simply the filtering down of liberal doctrine. My task is not to answer the questions that others have wrestled with. The goal here is only to ask some clarifying questions. This then would be successful even if it only elicits a continuing discussion.

I am not sure how there could be any debate, among us, over the fact that God is the ruler of all from eternity through eternity. Every spiritual and physical thing is under his rule. What you choose to call that kingdom and rule is another issue but that kingdom does exist. There could then be no debate that other kingdoms identified in

the expanse of time and space would then have to be part of that all-encompassing kingdom. However, none of those parts as a kingdom would be equal to the whole.

There could be little challenge that there were earthly kingdoms ruled by earthly kings. The Davidic kingdom as part of history is not part of the debate. Of course the future of the Davidic, Messianic, millennial kingdom is denied by those outside our circles.

Even the kingdom darkness would fit with the understanding of most of us. For those in our camp the discussion begins with the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God and the eternal kingdom. The latter subject might be easier to deal with than the other two. I am fully aware that many feel that they have all of these kingdoms in neat little boxes, but that may not work for everyone.

Which Kingdom is that?

Music from the past and present has not helped solve this problem. The lyrics of many songs would cause the thoughtful biblicist to ask “which kingdom is that.” On the other hand, music may be the worst place in the world to get one’s theology. It is not just music that has caused the confusion. We do not have to look very far into current publications and sermons to ask “what kingdom are they talking about.”

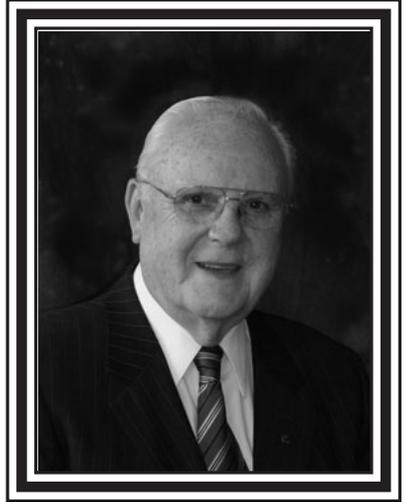
To add to the dilemma, there is more than enough confusion caused in dispensational writing over the mystery kingdom and the persistence that all references to “the Kingdom of Heaven” are limited to the millennial kingdom.

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Promoted to Heaven

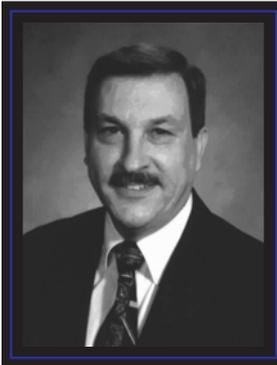
Dr. David Cummins went home to be with his Lord on August 13, 2009, after a courageous battle with cancer. Dr Cummins served Baptist World Mission since 1997 as Deputation Director, having completed eight different pastorates before this post since 1950. More details about his life, ministries and family may be viewed on the Baptist World Mission website at: <http://www.baptistworldmission.org/DrCumminsHomegoing.asp>

Our favorite remembrance of Dr. Cummins is as a Baptist historian. Most of us should be familiar with the first two volumes of *This Day in Baptist History*, which he co-authored. They gave readers a day-by-day glimpse of our precious Baptist heritage in the form of a daily devotional. They have been valuable in providing a means by which everyone could learn about great Baptist people and their contributions that established our heritage, but in a manner that was not overwhelming to their readers.



It was your editor's privilege to fellowship with Dr. Cummins last September in Bible Baptist Church of West Chester, where he spoke on Baptist History. It was a blessing to hear him rehearse our heritage and a joy to have conversations with him about a subject we both loved. Dr. Cummins also brought some copies of his new third edition of *This Day in Baptist History*, which he had written and published himself. It made a welcome addition to the earlier editions as part of my Baptist History collection. We praise the Lord for his life, testimony and earnest contention for the faith.

—Editor



The Culture Wars Is There A Biblical Culture?

By Dr. Charles Dear

About 15 years ago two government representatives showed up at our church to conduct a survey, asking how many different nationalities/ethnic groups we had in our church. What interest the government of that time had in such statistics seemed strange; but when I told them I didn't know because we never counted them all, they asked me to estimate how many right there and then for their survey. I counted 23 off the top of my head, but probably missed a few by not writing them all down. Now, 15 years later, we probably have half or less of that number; but we are still an ever-broadening multicultural church, as we have been throughout the 75-year history of our church. The question, however, is how local church ministries are shaped by the cultures of their communities

and the world. Perhaps the greater question is how should our local church ministries be impacted by culture, if at all?

For our purposes here, let us define culture as a set of shared attitudes, values, mores, practices, foods, even goals that characterize any institution, organization or identifiable group of people. Of all the unifying elements in a culture, language is the most significant distinction between cultures and the most significant bond between those within a cultural group. The marks of any culture have been collected over time and have evolved along the lines of what pleases people. Where cultures have had some history in or relationship with Judeo-Christian principles, culture was not so much a concern for our churches; but as equal respect for all cultures became a priority in our "melting pot" society and as non-Christian and anti-Christian cultures were brought into our nation, we face a growing conflict that demonstrates the inroads made by politically correct multiculturalism in our churches.

For example, if you were to ask a church member if they see themselves as a Lilliputian who happens to be a Christian, or as a Christian, who happens to also be a Lilliputian, what answer do you think you would receive from all your members? You might be surprised,

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Kingdom Theology (Continued from page 3)

At this point we have not answered any questions but simply challenged thinking around kingdom theology. My students often complain that I never answer any questions. I tell them that is not my job. My task is to teach them how to think and find the answers to their own questions.

Questionable terminology

I have no way of knowing the motives, but I am puzzled by those in our fold who are blurring the clear line between Israel and the church. I do understand why those who hold to replacement theology do this. I also understand the theology that produces little challenges that damage the clear distinctiveness of the church.

Why the plethora of kingdom talk among us today? This is the age of the church and it is the age of grace. God is building the church. We are not building the church or the kingdom or any kingdom. God is growing the church; we are not growing the church or the kingdom. Where is the clear teaching in the epistles that the church is a kingdom and that Christ is King of the church? If those things are false, and they are, why do we tolerate such misleading terminology in our music let alone in our pulpits?

The practice of using a few questionable texts to cloud the majority is a dangerous and aged practice. Some who find a single text on a subject fail to realize they actually have a question, but do not have an answer. One thing is for sure, those who are careless about the treatment of the church distinctives are headed in an unwise direction.

The heart of the matter

It is not difficult to understand what is behind this whole debate. The heart of the matter is actually found in hermeneutics. Interpretation of the text is hard work, but it is not hard. God has given us a very clear and workable

system. Humans seem to love to complicate and to confuse, but our responsibility is to simplify so that we can clarify.

A person can create any kind of kingdom theology if they create their own hermeneutic. There can be only one plan that will guide one to a theology that is biblical on any subject. The one system of interpretation that rises from the scripture is succinct and direct. A biblical hermeneutic is scientific in its nature and will produce one correct interpretation for each text.

This is one of the reasons I oppose the terminology of a dispensational hermeneutic. If we believe that this is the biblical system then why not just use the biblical system. The particular things that flow from a biblical hermeneutic will always produce a dispensational theology but that is secondary. The biblical hermeneutic stands alone and is the core of all reliable interpretation.

One thing we can be sure of

What we can know is that all error is rooted in erroneous hermeneutics. We criticize those who claim to use a literal system of hermeneutics until they come to prophecy and then switch to spiritualizing the text. This is exactly what is taking place in the stealth influx of gray kingdom terminology in our own midst.

I am writing this in the shadow of Alexandria, Egypt, where at the end of the second century the literal, normal, plain, consistent hermeneutic was almost eradicated from the church. My work actually is a painful experience in that almost every believer we meet is cursed with spiritualizing of the text.

Our masters program here labors constantly to erase that error in this land. It further troubles me that ever so slowly this curse has found its way into fundamentalism. This is evidenced in frivolous kingdom terminology as opposed to a careful dissecting of the text with the great advantage of the one biblical hermeneutic.

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depending upon how important their earthly culture is in how they think of themselves. We have had former members frankly admit that the preaching was far better in our church than the church from which they came, yet they were returning to their former church because they missed the music and the culture. They left not because they were uncomfortable in a multicultural church, nor because they felt unwelcome or unaccepted, but because culture was a higher priority than their own spiritual growth.

Are we dismissing culture altogether here? Not really, but we must guard our ministries against the overthrow of Biblical culture by the cultures of men. First, we must ask if we recognize that there is a Biblical Culture. Doesn't the Bible prescribe a set of attitudes, values, mores, practices and even language that conflict with those of manmade cultures; and if so, must we not agree that whatever culture we have acquired by the accident of birth must be subservient to the culture we have acquired through the new birth? In fact, shouldn't the elements of manmade culture always be filtered through Biblical principles and culture before we embrace any of their tenets as worthy of consideration? How we respond to such questions will determine the future of our churches and ministries profoundly.

The development of civilizations and cultures can be traced throughout the Bible; but the evidence is clear that, apart from Biblical principles, inspired by God, not Man, culture is not the answer to man's needs. In fact, it has always fallen short because it is the wisdom of Men, not the wisdom of God. The civilization of Cain's descendants in Genesis 4 is replete with building cities, gathering people together, developing skills and trades, and even music and musical instruments as a part of its culture; but the absence of the worship of God with it suggests they deemed it unnecessary to their progress, much like our present circumstances. Likewise, the time of the Judges reveals a culture apart from God, where the prevailing refrain was "...every man did that which was right in his own eyes." The cultures of the heathen nations surrounding Israel repeatedly drew them away from devoted service to Jehovah God. In the New Testament, we find similar references like Paul made to Cretians in Titus 1:12, who were known for their dishonesty; and in Philippians 3 he turns his back completely on his heritage and culture as a Pharisee to embrace Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Paul's teachings in Ephesians 5 regarding the honor of wives by their husbands militated against the poor treatment of women common in that part of the world in the first century. Surely Paul's testimony in such passages ought to erase any question in our minds about the corrupt nature of human culture and the infinite

superiority of a culture consistent with Biblical principles.

It should also make us cautious about the employment of worldly methods to achieve the purposes of the Lord's work. An honest assessment of the Madison Avenue methods and worldly styles of music will reveal concessions made to a culture that does not spring from Scripture. Having opened the door ever so slightly to appeal to people on their own cultural terms, how can we then stem the tide of other cultural issues such as social drinking, dancing, gambling, profanity, promiscuity, if they are also recognized and accepted parts of cultures present in our communities? Whereas many of us have relegated multiculturalism to be something only found outside the Church, the truth is that we have already been promoting it under the cloak of other terms like "Contemporary" and "Progressive" within the Church context for the last 50 years, if not more.

It is high time to awake out of sleep when we are confronted by some of the most serious challenges to our Judeo-Christian heritage and culture that we have ever seen. One of the major challenges to our Judeo-Christian heritage and culture came years ago from our own federal government. In 1965, Lyndon Johnson signed the Immigration and Nationality Act which dramatically changed the demographics and culture of America for the foreseeable future. Promoted by Senator Edward Kennedy, it changed the immigration quotas to significantly reduce acceptance of European immigrants in favor of immigrants from other parts of the world. Other parts of the world that either lack any Judeo-Christian history or in the last 200 hundred years have had a non-Biblical religious totalitarianism imposed upon them in the name of Christianity, such as Romanism. What our nation has been, historically, owes a great deal to our founding fathers whose Biblical principles were developed in those European nations until intolerance of Biblical truth caused them to be driven out and across the sea to America. The generations that have come to America since their time gladly conformed to the existing language and culture they found here, until the social engineers in Washington invented the dogma of multiculturalism.

The impact of the changes introduced has brought notable differences in our culture and society. To name a few in the broader context of national affairs: Courts that wish to consult foreign law when making decisions for American citizens; government officials who want to incorporate Sharia Law into our system of jurisprudence, including the question being debated of whether a father can kill his daughter who apostasizes from Islam, here in America. The impact of these changes upon our jurisprudence and society, however, cannot help but bring serious challenges closer to home, into our local churches, where we are expected to accept concepts and practices

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long commonplace in foreign cultures such as: proving a woman can bear children before a man will marry her; toleration/acceptance of spousal physical and mental abuse; living together being accepted on par with marriage; the normalizing of dishonesty and theft, etcetera. What we are witnessing is the systematic dismantling of a culture that made America great and its replacement by others that profoundly reject our Judeo-Christian heritage.

The abandonment of Biblical principles has already produced a society that has become profoundly hedonistic, uncontrollably violent, crude, coarse and profane in its language and idolizes the godless, feeds on rebellion and glories in dishonesty. The conflicts that exist between Biblical culture and all other cultures cannot be ignored, nor glossed over as unimportant to our churches. If we fail to draw the distinctions necessary, our people will not understand the issue and expect their worldly cultures to hold equal authority with the Word of God. It will also have a blunting effect upon our fulfillment of the great Commission. One of the most successful ways to marginalize Biblical Christianity, since the 1960's, is to identify it exclusively with one ethnic or racial stereotype. While history demonstrates otherwise, this false claim has done more to advance the cults and Islam, while simultaneously undermining Biblical Christianity among those for whom cultural identity has become more important than Truth. It also explains why American history, particularly our spiritual history, cannot be taught

in public education at any level, because the undermining of Biblical Christianity is the product of design, not ignorance or accident. The result has been the elevation of culture over religious preferences and practices, regardless of Biblical principles and the advocacy of a cafeteria-style selection of churches and religious practices by our society, according to cultural tastes. Our people are becoming Lilliputians who feel more compelled to be loyal to whatever is called Lilliputian religion, than Truth.

The ultimate question is how we will deal with cultural issues in our churches. In a pluralistic society, where diversity continues to broaden and calls for the inclusion of new and different practices and beliefs increase, pastors and church leaders will feel increasing pressure for giving culture more sway to shape ministry, worship and the personal life of professing believers. Unless we draw the lines according to Biblical principles, in every area of spiritual life, we will become just another extension of a constantly evolving culture, having no godly impact, such as we already see in the fall and decline of main line denominations all around us. It is what the social engineers want us to become, along with all the others already fallen; but we cannot "make the difference" by conforming to this world. If we fail to impact the cultures around us and, instead, allow the cultures to direct and shape our ministries, we will have lost the battle for the Gospel. May our hearts' desire be that we are counted among those who "turned the world upside down" and not vice versa.

(This article has been reprinted and expanded from the PARBC *Keystone Baptist*)

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