

# The Harvester



## Preparing Souls

## To Serve The Lord



Volume 36

September 2015

Number 2

## The Great Commandment

By Mike Elledge

Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, <sup>36</sup>“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” <sup>37</sup>Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ <sup>38</sup>This is the first and great commandment. <sup>39</sup>And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ <sup>40</sup>On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” (Mt. 22:35-40, NKJ)

How effective is Satan, the deceiver of the whole world? Consider this, our Lord and Savior was asked, point blank, “What is the great commandment?” Jesus, not only tells the lawyer, but He also throws in the second to illustrate that the entire teaching of the Old Testament can be boiled down to giving our all to God, to “fear God and keep His commandments” and to “love your neighbor as yourself.” Yet, somehow, an entire world of believers have managed to slip right past most of the implications of the first commandment, moved right on to the second commandment, and have allowed their collective consciences to be lulled into a false sense of security. The sentiment I speak of can be summed up in the modern ethos: “Just be a good person and you will be saved.”

Jesus once said,

Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. <sup>22</sup>Many will say to Me in that day, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?” <sup>23</sup>And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!” (Mt. 7:21-23)

The kind of people of who I am speaking know these words, you can read them right to them, and it will simply

never dawn on them that perhaps these words just might apply to them! In fact, one of the techniques offered up by this crowd is to point to someone who also believes in Jesus and has lived a life of self sacrifice, and then ask; “Are you saying they are lost?”

My answer is that, first of all, I am not the judge, but let me tell you what the Judge has already said. It is by grace through faith that anyone will be saved, “and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). Many times when people point to the works of another who was well known for living a life of self-sacrifice, who did indeed love his neighbor as himself, what they have unwittingly done is weigh that person’s commitment to the second law, and then offer themselves as a judge, implying that a person like that must be saved, while they challenge me to pronounce them lost, so that they can hold me up as an example of a mean spirited, judgmental person. I have noticed people seldom get upset if the one they ask about is judged to be saved, but they blow a gasket if you pronounce them lost! It takes just as much judgment to do the one as the other! However, the point I am focused on at the moment is how easily they have slipped past the first commandment Jesus gave and moved right on to the second commandment!

Well first things first: our salvation starts with our relationship with God. It is not possible to truly be good to God, and not be good to our fellow man. John said, “But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?” (1 Jn. 3:17). However, it is quite possible to be good to our fellow man, without being mindful of God at all! In my twenty years since becoming

a preacher, I have met and made many friends who would literally do anything I ask to help me except one thing: they will not come to worship with me. They fancy themselves bridge builders, but that is a bridge too far. As Jesus said, and it bears repeating, the great law in the Old Testament is to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind. If we are not willing to study His word carefully, submit to its teachings, all of its teachings—“teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Mt. 28:20)—and take our rightful place in the Lord’s church, I am not sure we can claim that we really love God as much as we would like to believe.

## Abraham and the Need For the Great Commandment

There is a significant statement found in Genesis 18:19 concerning why the Lord, with the angels, chose to stop by Abraham’s tent on the way to Sodom and Gomorrah. The Lord, speaking to the two angels said, “For I have known him, in order that *he may command his children and his household after him*, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice” (emphasis added, ME). Most of us know what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah, but what happened to Lot, Abraham’s nephew? In one of the most distasteful and incredible stories in all the Old Testament, Lot finds himself impregnating his own two daughters! How does that work? His children are also his grandchildren? It is kind of hard to get the mind around that one. Notice, though, who the two children were that were born to Lot. His own daughters, by his seed, bore both the Moabite nation as well as the Ammonite nation.

Here’s a question or two. Do you

suppose Moab and Ben Ammi were ever told what exactly it was that happened to Sodom and Gomorrah? Do you suppose they ever met Abraham and do you suppose that Abraham and Lot taught them about the God that called Abraham and Lot out of Ur of the Chaldees? I believe the obvious answer is yes, of course! Well then, how in the world did Moab and Ben Ammi drift so far from the God to whom both Abraham and Lot introduced them?

By the time Moses wrote the Pentateuch, Balak, the king of Moab was calling for Balaam to come curse Israel, even though the Israelites descended from the uncle of Balak’s descendants! How is it that both the Moabites and the Ammonites came to practice child sacrifice as a way to please their gods, Chemosh and Molech, passing their children “through the fire” (cf. 2 Kgs. 16:3)?! When Balak could not get Balaam to curse Israel, Balaam counseled him to use the Midianite women to commit harlotry. Wait a minute, now, from where did the Midianites come? Read Genesis 25:1-2 and you (*continued on page 4*)

**CORRECTION** The following statement in last month’s (Aug. 2015) Harvester (thirteen lines down from the top of the second column on page 1) is incorrect: “evidences by the coordinating conjunction ‘and’ that join them (Mt. 28:19-20).” The whole sentence should read: “Grammatically, baptizing and teaching [them to observe] are equal parts in ‘making disciples.’ They are present active participles, showing relative aspect of time in relation to the main verb, which is the imperative, ‘make disciples.’” The online version reflects the change. Thank to the one who caught the mistake! I was thinking about one verse (Acts 2:38) while writing of another (Mt. 28:19-20)! —*Brian Kenyon*

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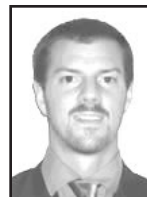
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## “Do You Understand Sin?”

41st Annual Lectureship **Jan. 18-21, 2016** Brian R. Kenyon, Director

### MONDAY

9:00 Before Sin Entered the World  
9:40 The Devil and His Work  
10:20 BREAK  
10:50 The Effects of the First Sin  
11:30 LUNCH

Doug Burleson  
Jackie M. Stearsman

Russ Crosswhite

#### Forum: Young People and Overcoming Sin

1:30 Peer Influence  
2:00 Wisdom on WiFi  
2:30 Defeating Worldliness  
3:00 BREAK  
3:30 Questions And Answers On Forum Topic  
4:30 DINNER  
6:30 Congregational Singing  
7:00 The Anatomy of Sin  
7:45 The Promised Savior

Thomas Wise  
Forest Antemasaris  
Hiram Kemp

Will Vann  
Paul Sain

### WEDNESDAY

9:00 Calvinism's Influential View of Sin  
9:40 Jeroboam's Sinful System of Worship  
10:20 BREAK  
10:50 The Apostasy of Israel  
11:30 LUNCH

Rick Kenyon  
David Dixon

Jimmy Clark

#### Forum: Worship and Overcoming Sin

1:30 Nadab and Abihu  
2:00 When Gender Roles Go Too Far  
2:30 Evaluating Current Trends in Worship  
3:00 BREAK  
3:30 Questions And Answers On Forum Topic  
4:30 DINNER  
6:30 Congregational Singing  
7:00 “Repent and Be Baptized”  
7:45 Jesus' Life and Its Effect on Sin

Cameron C. Freeman  
Earl D. Edwards  
Rico Brown

Jeremy Padilla  
Bill Davis

### TUESDAY

9:00 The Old Testament Sacrificial System  
9:40 The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)  
10:20 BREAK  
10:50 Sin and the Antediluvian World  
11:30 LUNCH

David Stearsman  
Stephen Atnip

Rick Kenyon

#### Forum: Families and Overcoming Sin

1:30 Eli: Failures in Parenting Lead to Sin  
2:00 Sin in David's Family  
2:30 Breaking Sin's Cycle in the Family  
3:00 BREAK  
3:30 Questions And Answers On Forum Topic  
4:30 DINNER  
6:30 Congregational Singing  
7:00 Sins of God's People: Then and Now  
7:45 Jesus' Birth and Its Effect on Sin

Jon Podein  
Mike Elledge  
J. Brooks Boyd, Jr.

Ben Radford  
Jimmy Clark

### THURSDAY

9:00 Korah and His Cohorts  
9:40 Dealing with Divisive Brethren  
10:20 BREAK  
10:50 Gentiles Condemned  
11:30 LUNCH

Cameron C. Freeman  
Robert Bauer

Melvin Otey

#### Forum: Dealing with Sin

1:30 Between Individuals  
2:00 What About “Congregational Sin”?  
2:30 Withdrawing Fellowship  
3:00 BREAK  
3:30 Questions And Answers On Forum Topic  
4:30 DINNER  
6:30 Congregational Singing  
7:00 The Christian's Relationship to Sin  
7:45 Jesus' Death: Reconciliation and Justification

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### The Harvester

September 2015

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(continued from page 2) will find that after the death of Sarah, Abraham's wife, he took another wife named Keturah. One of the six children produced with Keturah was Midian! Once again, here was a people who started out knowing exactly who God was but drifted far away.

No wonder Moses commanded Israel to "teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deut. 6:7). God,

through Moses, was trying to keep Israel from wandering away from Him, because history clearly teaches that a people who are not taught the ways of the Lord will surely wander away, inch by rebellious inch! Old Testament history clearly shows that where the people wandered was evil and disgusting!

### Conclusion

So what is the lesson for the church? If we do not stand up and proudly proclaim the one true church we read about in the Bible, we will certainly grow to see the church as another denomination among denominations. If we do not teach our kids that God's plan for marriage is one man, one woman, for life, they will come to regard marriage after the same manner as the world. If we do not teach our children God expects men to lead in the church and women to learn in submission, we will have women doing everything men do, in the same manner as the denominational world in which we live. Are these always easy subjects to teach? No, but then again, I remember reading somewhere that "narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." Let us be sure to be among the few. 🌿



**Fall 2015 class!** Front row: Victor, Rico, Hannah, Scott; second row: Shawn, Forest, Percy, Anthony, Hiram; top row: James, Frederick, Dylan, Brian

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