

## **A Chaste Virgin**

*2 Corinthians 11:2*

The current divorce rate is more than one in three. Sensuality prevails despite the deadly risk of sexually transmitted diseases (recent reports are that 1 in 250 Americans are HIV carriers). Homosexuality is militantly promoted as an "alternate lifestyle." For the Bible believing Christian, this is a sad commentary on the world's condition. Today the saying is often true that "as goes the world so goes the church." Indeed, some churches are now making theological adjustments to compensate for the needs of their worldly-wise membership.

The Roman Catholic "mother church" has greatly modified its standards in recent years. "Since Vatican Council II, the traditional grounds for obtaining an annulment—in effect, a declaration that one or more of the requirements of a sacramental marriage was missing in the first place—have been more liberally interpreted. In 1990, Catholic marriage tribunals in the United States accepted 45,000 petitions for annulment. Nearly 37,000 were granted. Since 1983, however, the church no longer excommunicates divorced and remarried Catholics, which may be why only 10 percent now bother to seek annulments." (Newsweek, March 30, 1992 p.60)

These are staggering statistics. Fully 82% of all annulments applied for were granted. Also, if 45,000 annulments represents only 10% of those needing one, a half million American Catholics are divorcing annually with the church's tacit consent!

A recent Associated Press release detailed the intent of several mainline Protestant churches to modify their position on sexual morality. Why are they modifying their position? They want to remain relevant. Today's society, which they serve, is rapidly changing. Traditional values are constantly being challenged. If these churches don't "keep up with the times" their support would wither away. If their popular support dies; their organizations would also die. A large segment of today's church membership is involved in adultery, fornication or homosexual relations. These, however, some Protestant churches would pardon. The modern theological concept by which pardon could be given is called Justice Love.

Justice Love, in brief, is defined as a sense of mutual caring and commitment between partners. It can exist whether the partners are married or not. Extramarital, premarital and homosexual relations would be permitted so long as Justice Love was present. The Protestant church leaders advancing this viewpoint believe "justice love" is the real object of Jesus teachings. They consider the physical acts committed in these relationships of little eternal consequence. They feel that the love behind them is what God wants for humanity. Instead of being transformed by the faith of Christ; these churches are conforming the faith of Christ to this world's standards. Romans 12:1,2

### **Legitimate Questions**

We cannot agree to their sophistry. We affirm that love is the greatest of God's gifts to mankind. Love, however, does not contradict other teachings of God's Word.

Jesus said, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." Matthew 19:9 The council of Apostles and elders in Jerusalem (Acts

15:4-29) admonished the brethren of Christ to abstain from fornication. "Be not deceived," said Paul, "neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God." ( I Corinthians 6:9-10) Paul is obviously not excluding those who formerly practiced those things. He goes on to say "And such were some of you." (verse 11)

We legitimately ask, have the standards of discipleship changed? Are those who practice Scripturally prohibited sexual acts better people than those who practiced them in the days of Jesus and the Apostles? Are today's sinners more deserving of God's grace than those of ages past? The answer to all three questions is no. The Word of God has not changed in regard either to standards of discipleship or God's perception of the fallen human race. "Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever." Psalm 119:160

## **A Worldly Church**

A popular phrase is "I'm too bad for heaven and too good for hell." Many now involved in Scripturally unauthorized sexual relationships are otherwise very good people; perhaps better than we are in some respects. They may be noble-minded co-workers, neighbors or even family members. Surely these are too good to be doomed to an eternity of ceaseless suffering! Yet, according to God's Word, such shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven. I Corinthians 6:9-10

Failing to see that the Scriptures teach two salvations (for Christians now and the remainder of mankind in Christ's kingdom) has resulted in a theological disaster. To save as many as possible the worldly masses, the tares of Matthew 13, have been squeezed into the church. To fit the masses in, the standards of discipleship were reduced to the lowest possible common denominator. The narrow way and straight gate of the high calling in Christ Jesus have been trampled by trying to fit the whole world into it. Matthew 7:13,14 The masses who practice immorality will not inherit the kingdom of heaven—that reward is reserved for Christ's "little flock." Luke 12:32 But Jesus has other sheep beside his little flock. He has those who will be his at his coming (Greek "presence"). These will be blessed in Christ's earthly kingdom. John 10:16; I Corinthians 15:23; Matthew 25:34

The Biblical standards of Christian discipleship are very high. Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said by them of old time 'Thou shalt not commit adultery:' But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Matthew 5:27,28 Far beyond merely avoiding fleshly acts of immorality, the true Christian is to avoid spiritual adultery. In other words—to avoid illicit union with the spirit of the world. 1 Corinthians 2:12

The Apostle James said, "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?" (James 4:4 NAS) James called the brethren (male and female) "adulteresses." Why? They were courting the carnal values of this world. They were in grave danger of committing spiritual adultery, of leaving their first love—Jesus the Bridegroom.

The woman described in Revelation 17 represents a false church. Her main characteristic is that of being an adulteress. She is guilty of committing fornication with the kings of the earth. She "sold out" to the kings of the earth in order to be relevant to this world. The result was unfaithfulness to her espoused husband—the Lord Jesus Christ. Instead of

waiting to reign with King Jesus at his appearing and kingdom; the false church of Revelation 17 united with the kings of the earth.

That adulterous alliance brings temporal power now! They have reigned as kings without us. (see 1 Corinthians 4:8) The urge to wield temporal power in this present life has been a great test for the church. Changing Biblical standards of morality to oblige worldly values is a test now. The hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world (Revelation 3:10) will also try the faith of Christ's brethren.

### **The Chaste Bride**

Will we remain chaste, or become adulteresses? Will we look to the world for our standards or will we choose the narrow way? Will we bravely go forward in the old paths against the strong contradiction of sin? By God's grace—we will remain spiritually chaste.

"I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:2) The pure and simple faith that Paul had imparted to the Corinthian church, and to us by his epistles, can only be maintained by holding fast the doctrines as they were originally taught. "For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully." 2 Corinthians 11:4 NAS Bearing the tests of moral and doctrinal purity magnify the beauty of Christ's bride—his true church. How lovely she looks to him as she stands in faithful obedience to his teachings. Relevance to the world and its subsequent approval will be meaningless to the true Christian. All who are Christ's will look to him for guidance. All who are Christ's will seek his approval.