

Baptism, Marriage & Funeral Ceremonies

Fred R. Coulter—February 17, 1996

I like to give funerals for those who die in the faith. This woman was not in the faith, but I was asked if I had something. I was faxed something that was done in Worldwide, and I looked at it and it started right out with “the wages of sin is death” and there’s no immortal soul. When I gave my first funeral, it was July—I was ordained in May 1965—and I didn’t know it, but the three sisters who asked me to perform the funeral, they were living together. Two of them had been married, their husbands died and the third was never married. One of their family died and they asked me to do the funeral.

How do I do a funeral? I have my trusty little guide, so I went on down—150 miles—way out in Idaho. Anyway, I did not know that all these people were Catholic. I really did it! I just went through and read the thing like it was and preached it just like it was. It says in there that Herbert Armstrong did this because there were atheists out there and he wanted to let them know—BOOM! Sure enough, he did. He smacked them right in the face! I almost got tripped going down the aisle after giving that! So, I learned a lesson on that.

My second funeral was one that I had to really make a change, because this was a very tragic situation. People, again not in the Church, but what happened was this: Mom and dad got a babysitter so they could go out. There was a fire in the room where the baby was and it burned up. They come home and their baby is dead. I knew immediately not to use that straight outline that’s in the book, because what sin had the baby done? *None!*

I adjusted it and I gave just a straight *second resurrection* funeral, because you have to give people hope. You just cannot come in there and lambaste them like that. It is an opportunity to preach the Gospel, but I think since it’s ‘all appointed once to die’ and the ‘wages of sin is death,’ there it’s really talking about the *second death* when you really analyze it, though we may sin or there may be an accident and we may die sooner than we expect. Of course, if we die sooner than we expect, we’re just dead, we have no thoughts of it.

The first funeral that I gave when we were in Christian Biblical was Esther Grisinger. The next one was her husband Robert; both those were very gut-wrenching. Then, I had a loan officer working for me and his brother wanted to get married, so he knew I was a minister. The lady he was to marry was his high school sweetheart, but she grew up and

married someone else and had a couple of children and then her husband died. They met each other again and it was like no time had ever been lost. So, they asked me to do the wedding. I worked up a wedding ceremony which we’ll cover here in a bit. I had that and try to improve on it as we go along.

Then I got this letter from South Africa and it said, ‘What am I going to do if someone wants to be baptized?’ So, I started writing the letter and it expanded and expanded. I was doing the funeral ceremony, I might as well just finish this and do a baptismal ceremony. Just thinking about it, none of us have ever known anything about a baptismal ceremony—have we? *Just in Worldwide!*

I wrote him in South Africa and said, ‘A person does not need to be an ordained elder or a minister to baptize. They certainly do for anointing. A person needs to be an elder for that.’

BAPTISM

John 4:1: “Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John, (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples)” (vs 1-2). Why did He have his disciples baptize them instead of Jesus baptizing them? Two very good reasons:

1. If they got into a shouting match over whose baptism was more valid. Someone could say they were baptized by Jesus Himself, therefore, ‘mine is more valid than yours.’
2. If Jesus had not died—which it does tie in with the death of Jesus Christ

It was a baptism unto repentance, much like John’s, but then for the receiving of the Holy Spirit whenever Christ would die. I assume that some of these disciples here may have been part of the 120 which were there in Acts 1—don’t know for sure.

Let’s come to the *Baptismal Ceremony for the Christian Biblical Church of God*—a person should really know a lot and a lot of members know a lot. They should be able to go ahead and baptize, especially if there’s not a minister around. They should be able to go ahead and baptize, but what has to be is:

Each person who desires to be baptized should be counseled to determine whether the individual has truly repented of his or

her sins and has accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

This is not in the sense that the Protestants have. They said, accept the Lord, open your heart and He comes in and you're now saved, which then completely bypasses anything to do with baptism. Baptism is not even ever mentioned. Then I mention some of the things that you need to determine and ask some questions as you're going through.

The person must understand what sin is—the transgression of God's commandments and laws. Each one must realize that the sacrifice and the blood of Jesus Christ is the only payment for his or her sins.

There are things we need to know:

1. John 6:44: "No one can come to Me unless the Father, Who sent Me, draws him..."

There has to be a calling. You have to determine that.

2. Romans 2:4: "...the graciousness of God leads us to repentance."

Or the kindness or goodness of God leads us to repentance.

Another purpose of baptismal counseling is to determine whether the individual has the fruits of repentance and the desire to live God's way and to keep His commandments as magnified by Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

- Psa. 51 is a psalm of repentance—that's where David repented.
- Psa. 86 shows the readiness of God to forgive and so forth.

Let's go to Matthew, the third chapter, and let's see what John the Baptist preached. I got a call the other night from a man who said, 'How can I get a Passover book?—*The Christian Passover*. He said, 'I'm half Jewish.' Whenever they are Jewish or half-Jew they always have to tell you. I said, 'Utt oh' to myself. He said, 'I agree with your conclusion, but I don't agree the way that you got there. I haven't read the book.' Then he proceeded to tell me a little bit about a Jewish tradition, which is the fasting of the firstborn on the fourteenth. I said that I didn't find that in the Scriptures.

He's going to send that to me, and he says he has information that they did unleaven their houses before the fourteenth began, that they kept a little bag of leaven to burn later on the fourteenth—I think the day portion. But I think he will be surprised to find that we also discovered that just by going through the New Testament. Then, I was given a couple of tapes from the Christian Jew Foundation and the first thing he starts out with is the 'tradition

of the rabbis is...' That's why Paul said in the New Testament there is 'neither Jew nor Greek; male nor female; Scythian or barbarian.'

I told this man that we have a series that we entitled *Scripturalism vs Judaism* and we showed how the beginning with John how that Christ and John the Baptist were making a decisive separation from Judaism. He's going to be a little surprised when he gets it.

Matthew 3:1: "Now, in those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, 'Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' For this is he who was spoken of by Isaiah the prophet, saying, '*The voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight His paths."*' Now John himself wore a garment of camel's hair, and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey" (vs 1-4). Very austere! Also, he was a Nazarite from birth, which means that he probably had a flowing mane of hair and a flowing beard. I'll bet he was awesome to look at. When he said to repent, this was something!

Verse 5: "Then went out to him *those from* Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the country around the Jordan and were being baptized by him in the Jordan... [by full immersion] ...confessing their sins. But after seeing many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them..." 'Oh, I'm so happy you have arrived! We have been waiting for you. You can take off your miter and your robes and we have a nice place for you to changed over there and you can come down in the clean part of the Jordan and we will baptize you.' NO! He didn't say that!

Notice how he treated them. Is this not separation complete: "...*You* brood of vipers, who has forewarned you to flee from the coming wrath? Therefore, produce fruits worthy... [answerable to an amended way of life] ...of repentance; and do not think to say within yourselves, "We have Abraham *for our father*"... [Isn't that what Christ said? Isn't that what Paul said? In the New Testament all children of Israel have to repent! All Gentiles have to repent! They're in exactly the same status to begin with.] ...for I tell you that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. But already the axe is striking at the roots of the trees; therefore, every tree that is not producing good fruit is cut down and thrown into *the fire*.'" (vs 5-10). Then they gave them a warning: ***If you don't repent then you're going to have the baptism of fire, which is going to come—the Lake of Fire!***

After these two things have been determined, the one doing the counseling needs to go through the Scriptures of

‘counting the cost’ with the person desiring to be baptized.... As you go over these Scriptures with the person, you need to determine whether or not that each one has made this commitment in his or her life before God the Father and Jesus Christ. This commitment is a covenant with Jesus Christ and God the Father. It is an irrevocable total decision of his or her life to Jesus Christ until death.

That becomes so important! One thing about this dedication: *it is never to be used*

- 1) for self-will
- 2) by others to leverage it so that they can manipulate you and use you and merchandise you, etc.

That’s between you, Jesus Christ and God the Father. Again, let’s see what Jesus said concerning this. I think we’ll also find this very enlightening. As we’re going through this, let’s just analyze this from the point of view of Passover preparation, because this will help us rededicate ourselves in a way that we need to. One thing: ***You cannot clean yourself up, only Christ can.***

The comment was made that when he came into the Church of God he wasn’t counseled on ‘counting the cost.’ And counting the cost later came as a great surprise. That’s why it should be addressed ahead of time. God is offering you eternal life in splendor and glory, the greatest and most precious thing that could ever happen to anyone. There has to be a *cost* we need to understand concerning it.

Luke 14:25: “And great multitudes were going with Him; and He turned *and* said to them, ‘If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers and sisters, and, in addition, his own life also, he cannot be My disciple’” (vs 25-26). We’re going to see that that means to *love God more* in comparison to. But, if someone comes to you and says, ‘I want you to prove your love to me, you must give up your God.’ Then you know what you need to do: ***follow God!***

Also included: *your own life*. We also have to reckon ourselves in being *dead to Christ* as we’re going along. Notice the next phrase: “...he cannot be My disciple.” In the Greek that means, in the strongest terms, it’s *impossible* to be My disciple.’ The Greek there is ‘ou’—which means *the absolute impossibility of* and the verb is ‘dunatai.’ It’s not that it cannot be, it is there is no power to make you My disciple. This is pretty profound when we understand it.

Verse 27: “And whoever does not carry his

cross... [Which means there’s going to be trouble and difficulty along the way. We don’t know what it is, that’s why He says]: ...does not carry his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple’” We have to come after Christ. Christ is not going to perpetually come after us. When God the Father calls us, He sends His Spirit to be with us, and then we have to make choices and decisions to follow the lead that He gives us. If we seek Him, we will find Him. Notice what it says, again, when you don’t come after Him and ‘bear your cross’—ou dunatai’—you “cannot be My disciple.

So, it’s not a matter of what a person professes. There are a lot of people who live even some Christian principles. But that doesn’t make them Christians in deed. What makes a person a Christian in deed? Let’s see what makes a person a disciple of Christ or not, which is accomplished after baptism. That way we know God is not making any mistakes. There may be tares, which the wicked one sows. There may be those who are lukewarm. There may be people who are nearly dead, and you can go through Rev. 2 & 3. But here is a thing that makes a person a disciple of Christ:

Romans 8:9: “However, you are not in *the* flesh, but in *the* Spirit... [as God views you] ...if *the* Spirit of God is indeed dwelling within you. But if anyone does not have *the* Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.” There’s the impossibility that he’s talking about. That’s why when you come to Christ you have to know that you have to count the cost. Then he goes on showing about someone who’s going to build and make sure that he has enough to finish it. If he doesn’t, everyone mocks him. Same way with someone going to war, you have to count the cost first.

Luke 14:33: “In the same way also, each one of you who does not forsake all that he possesses cannot be My disciple.... [again ‘ou dunatai’—impossibility. Why does He say, ‘forsake all that he has’? Does that mean go out and sell? The only one that I know of in the Scriptures that was told to give away everything that he had was the ‘rich man’ who had many possessions.] (Why does He say): ...forsake all that he possesses cannot be My disciple.”

That’s tied in with the meaning of coming out of the world, giving up—that’s true. When you die, what do you take with you? *Nothing!* Baptism is a death in the watery grave. Therefore, that’s what this has the meaning of here. That doesn’t mean to will everything away and go dress like John the Baptist and go up on top of a mountain and play John the Baptist. There was only one of him. Aren’t you glad? *Yes!*

Let’s go to Matthew 10:32; this shows us the

comparison that hate is a relative term in this particular instance in relationship to loving others. Then you have to let the Scriptures define the Scriptures and interpret the Scriptures so that we understand. “Now then, whoever shall confess Me before men... [This is what you’re doing when you’re baptized—correct? *Yes!*] ...that one will I also confess before My Father Who *is* in heaven... [Everyone likes v 32, but some people may not like v 33]: ...But whoever shall deny Me before men...” How do you deny God? *Many different* ways:

- rejecting His commandments
- saying His Word is not important
- rejecting the Spirit of God

“...that one will I also deny before My Father, Who *is* in heaven” (v 33). You never want to put yourself into a position where that there is not going to be any intercessory activity of Christ on your behalf. You never want it to get to where it’s going to be a denial to God the Father.

Verse 34, He makes it clear: “Do not think that I have come to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.” The Word of God is ‘sharper than any two-edged sword, dividing asunder the soul and spirit and the joints and marrows, discerning the intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12). This is the sword He’s talking about, literally, the sword of the Lord, which is the Spirit of God.

Verse 35: “For I have come to set a man at variance against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.... [This thing will happen because you’re called and they’re not.] ...And a man’s enemies *shall be those of* his own household. The one who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me... [‘eth’ in the old *King James* means ‘ing.’] ...and the one who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And the one who does not take up his cross [daily] and follow Me is not worthy of Me” (vs 35-38). This gives an ongoing thing that is something that we’re always doing.

Verse 39: “The one who has found his life... [nice and comfortable and secure] ...shall lose it, and the one who has lost his life... [to the world and to himself] ...for My sake shall find it.” We’re kind of at this juncture again—aren’t we? The way this is worded is that it means something that’s an ongoing thing constantly. It doesn’t mean that we have to go to extremes and buy swords and go out and do things like that. It just merely means that these things are going to be for us to confront all the time.

Baptism Counseling and Ceremony:

Prior to baptism would be best to go through these words of the baptismal

ceremony so each one can fully understand the significance of baptism. Also, these words are to be recited by the one who is doing the baptizing while he is in the water with the one who being baptized.

You’re not go in and pry into all their sins, because their confession is to God. You’re to determine whether they’ve repented sufficiently for baptism so that they can begin the Christian life. That the individual has determined to set his mind to love God and keep His commandments and so forth.

I give this whole section in Romans 1 to 11 and I think we’ll find this really important. This is important for a person to know. Make a booklet for those who are baptized. Give it to them before and make sure they understand it and then you can counsel with them about it. Put in there the date they were baptized. Put their name in there and then that is there own personal one, the one who baptized them and the date and all of that sort of thing. I know that that would be meaningful. How many here can remember a single, solitary word from your baptism? I can remember some of the words. I can remember the laying on hands more than anything else. I knew at that instant that I received God’s Spirit, and I knew that there was a change in my life—without a doubt!

In Acts 8 we find that Philip was baptizing, but he didn’t lay hands on for the receipt of the Holy Spirit. They had to send down the apostles to lay hands on them. So, it’s very possible that when there is an elder available that he should be the one who would do it. But when you’re dealing with a situation where there is no elder, but you have someone who is long-time in the Church then they can certainly do it. Obviously when you compare that with John 4 and there was not the laying on of hands for the receipt of the Holy Spirit because Jesus was not yet dead, then His disciples could do that without the same necessary qualifications that you might have later on, as it was with the apostles in Acts 8.

Even though the disciples baptized them and Jesus didn’t, it’s obvious they didn’t lay hands on them for the receiving of the Holy Spirit. That would be an instruction later. But as Jesus said to them, ‘The Holy Spirit is with you and shall be in you.’ That would be after He was resurrected. The Spirit did not come as a begettal until after He was resurrected from the dead (John 7) when He spoke that ‘out of His belly shall flow rivers of living water’ and He spoke of the Holy Spirit for those who would receive after He was resurrected from the dead.

Romans 6:1: “What then shall we say? Shall we continue in sin so that grace may abound?” That

was right after showing that through grace the imputed righteousness of Christ is given to each one of the believers, as we find in Rom. 5 is the gift of God. Grace does not give license to sin at all.

Verse 2: “MAY IT NEVER BE!... [That’s what it means in the Greek—may this never come into existence! It’s a very emphatic statement.] ...We who died to sin, how shall we live any longer therein?”—*as a way of life*, because that’s what it means. Obviously, it does not mean that you’re going to quit sinning and have no sins at all. It says a little later, ‘Don’t let sin rein—rule—over you.

Verse 3: “Or are you ignorant that we, as many as were baptized **into** Christ Jesus, were baptized **into** His death?” That’s why baptism is so important. That’s how the death of Jesus Christ can literally be applied to you. We’re baptized **into** His death.

Verse 4: “Therefore, we were [co-buried] buried... [that’s what it means in the Greek—one word that means *jointly buried* or *co-buried*] ...with Him through the baptism into **the** death... [Why is **into the** death? *In baptism you’re making a covenant with God and the covenant with God demands your life!* You’re certifying that covenant with your death in the watery grave—that’s what you’re actually doing.] ...so that, just as Christ was raised from *the* dead by the glory of the Father, in the same way, we also should walk in newness of life.” That’s why it’s important to determine whether the person desires to walk in newness of life. Wouldn’t be any good to baptize someone and then just have them get up; and live the way they’ve always lived; it won’t work!

Verse 5: “For if we have been conjoined together in the **likeness** of His death... [the Greek for *likeness* is ‘homoiomate’ which means *exactly the same*. When you go in that watery grave and you get buried under that water, God is looking at your death as the same as the death of Christ.] ...together in the likeness of His death.... [Paul uses another terminology here; then he gives us some hope by saying]: ...so also shall we be *in the likeness* of His resurrection.” When you have *so also* you go back and pick up the same comparison of the wordage.

Verse 6: “Knowing this... [Should we not know this when we’re baptized? Is this not important for us to know?] ...that our old man was **co-crucified** with *Him* in order that the body of **sin might be destroyed**... [Not destroyed all a once. Paul said, ‘I die daily.’] ...so that we might no longer be **enslaved** to sin... [controlled and dominated over by sin] ...because the one who has died *to sin*... [in the watery grave] ...has been **justified** from sin” (vs 6-7). Justified means *put in right standing with God*; made right with God

through Christ!

Verse 8: “Now, if we **died together** with Christ... [I couldn’t find a good English word for ‘co-deathed’] ...we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from *the* dead, dies no more; death no longer has any dominion over Him. For when He died, He died unto sin once for all... [all human beings and all ages] ...but in that He lives, He lives unto God. In the same way also, you should indeed reckon [calculate] yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God through Christ Jesus our Lord” (vs 8-11).

Verse 12: “Therefore, do not let sin rule in your mortal body by obeying it in the lusts thereof... [It’s a different thing to struggle against it and not want to sin, but you do end up sinning. That’s a pull of the flesh. Where you submissively obey it *in the lusts thereof* and say, ‘Oh, well...’ and just totally give into it.] ...Likewise, do not yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin; rather, yield yourselves to God as those who are alive from *the* dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not rule over you because you are not under law, but under grace” (vs 12-14). Knowing that this whole thing is by grace; baptism is by grace.

Verse 15: “What then? Shall we sin because we are not **under law**, but under grace?... [I might mention that in the English translation where it is *the law*, the word *the* is not there in the Greek. It is *under law*, not *the law*. A lot of people assume that you have no obligation to keep any laws with that kind of translation.] ...MAY IT NEVER BE! Don’t you realize that to whom you yield yourselves *as* servants to obey, you are servants of the one you obey, whether *it is* of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But thanks *be* to God, that you were *the* servants of sin, but you have obeyed from *the* heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you; and having been delivered from sin, you became *the* servants of righteousness” (vs 15-18). That shows then how we are to walk in newness of life. It’s very important concerning baptism.

If the person meets those basic requirements and fully understands the purpose of baptism, then it would be proper to baptize him or her.

Baptismal Ceremony:

This is a little broader than what we had with our former affiliation. You should get a *yes* answer for each of these questions:

- Have you repented of your sins?
- Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?

- Are you ready to bury your old sinful self and life into the covenant death of Jesus Christ in this watery grave?
- Are you going to walk in the way of Jesus Christ, keeping His commandments; to love Him with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul, all your being and with all your strength?

After receiving an affirmative answer to these questions, you should continue by asking:

What is your full name?

As we're going through this, just put your name there for the sake of what we're studying today.

Repeat the person's full name and say:

- because you have repented of your sins, which are the transgressions of God's Holy, righteous and perfect commandments and laws;
- and because you have accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior for the forgiveness of your sins, and Who is your Lord and Master in heaven above, sitting on the right hand of God the Father as your Intercessor and Mediator, and your King in the coming Kingdom of God;
- and because you are burying your old sinful self and life into the covenant death of Christ Jesus in this watery grave for the remission of your sins;
- and because you are determined to walk in newness of life, in the way of Jesus Christ, keeping His commandments and to love Him and God the Father with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul, and all your being and with all your strength

I baptize you, not into any sect, denomination or organization of this world, but into the name of the Father—because you will receive the begetting of His seed; and of the Son—because His life, sacrifice, death and resurrection brings the forgiveness of your sins; and of the Holy Spirit—because the Holy Spirit comes from God the Father and into your mind as a begetting to be a son/daughter of God, and will lead you into loving obedience to God the Father and Jesus Christ now, and when Jesus Christ returns you will be in the first resurrection and God will grant you eternal life as a son/daughter of God in glory. I do this in the name of Jesus Christ, that is by the

authority of the name of Jesus Christ—
AMEN!

I know this says an awful lot and it may be a little wordy, but in going through and trying to think this through—How can we best define to a new 'baptism' exactly what it is that they are doing? To add to it

After baptizing the person, the one doing the baptizing should lay hands on the head of the individual and pray for the begetting of the Holy Spirit and commend them into the hands of Jesus Christ and God the Father—AMEN! To finalize the baptism, the one doing the baptism should look the newly baptized person in the eyes, and say "On the authority of Jesus Christ your sins have been forgiven!"

Then you can lay hands on the person right while you're standing in the water—if it's not up in the Arctic or someplace where it's too cold—and pray for them right there. When you do, that should be a prayer from the heart, whomever is doing the baptizing, because you know enough about the individual so that it is a personal and meaningful prayer.

In going through these, if there's any experience that I've had, it's this: When we get something finished to a certain point, it's always used, whether we buy a piece of equipment or as with *The Christian Passover* book and getting it done or with *Lord, What Should I Do?* Having the baptismal ceremony thing, that's important and I think this will really help.

MARRIAGE—WEDDING

Then having the wedding ceremony—really quite a thing. With the wedding ceremony you don't want anything to go wrong. Everybody is nervous! What I did, the last wedding I had, I took and put in a little binder and I entitled it: *Our Sacred Wedding Ceremony*. I put their names on the front of it and put the whole ceremony in it with the certificate in the back and had them sign it and the best man and bridesmaid and so forth and gave it to them with this instruction. I went over it first and gave them a copy of it first. I said, 'What I want you to do when the going gets tough and when you have your first fight—which you probably will—go ahead and get this out and go over it again and understand that this is what you want to do.'

As I go through this we can view it from several points of view:

- If you are married, use it as something to strengthen your marriage; your own dedication

- If you are not married, use it as something to look forward to when you do get married
- If you are widowed or whatever, let's all look at it from this point of view: of what it's going to be like when we're resurrected and meet Christ in the air and there's going to be the wedding of Christ and the Church.

(go to the next track)

I like weddings. Weddings are my favorite thing. When I was asked to perform a wedding, I again looked at the old outline—remembered it—and I said we need to change these things and emphasize what's in the Scriptures.

This will be mostly just going through and reading the words together and make some comments as we go along. Just take it from the point of view of what it's going to be like when we are on the Sea of Glass and the Church is married to Christ.

I will have to say that it's very possible that God the Father Who will be the One Who will marry us. Stephen could look up and behold Christ standing at the right hand of the throne of God, then we can be sure that God the Father is going to come down for the most important event up to that time in history—the marriage of the Church and Christ.

This is a happy and joyous occasion. Marriage is a natural union but a Divine institution ordained at creation by Almighty God.

This intimate love relationship was created by God Himself because GOD IS LOVE. Physically and spiritually the marriage estate portrays mankind's supreme destiny of ONENESS with God and His Family in His eternal kingdom forever.

Since Almighty God is the Supreme Sovereign Ruler and He is our Creator, therefore, it is only fitting and right that we use the laws and principles of God's Word as the fundamental authority which govern this sacred marriage covenant into which you are both now entering.

It is a covenant, and a covenant is an agreement unto death.

In the beginning after the Lord God had created Adam, He said, "It is not good for man to be alone, I will make a helper suitable and compatible for him." So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man and he slept; then the Lord took one of the man's ribs and from it He

fashioned a woman and he brought her to the man.

The man said, "This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh, she shall be called 'woman' because she was taken out of man." For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and they shall become one flesh (Gen. 2:18, 21-24)

Then the Lord God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth."

Today, in the presence of these witnesses, we are asking the Lord God Almighty, in the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ to bless this marriage with love, understanding, in faithfulness and dedication to each other knowing that marriage is honorable in everything.

Jesus upheld this honor by teaching. He Who created them in the beginning made them male and female and said, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. Consequently, they shall no longer be two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together let no man separate" (Mk. 10:6-9).

Also, He said, "Whosoever divorces his wife, except for the cause of sexual infidelity and marries another, commits adultery. And if a woman divorces her husband, and is married to another, she commits adultery" (Matt. 5:32).

So, we see that it is God Who joins husband and wife together as one flesh. What God has bound, man is commanded by that authority not to separate. What God has bound only God can loose, as revealed in His Holy Word.

A marriage so bound and blessed by God is binding for life, for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, in want or in wealth, until death do they part.

Now, let's understand the New Testament instructions concerning the marriage estate:

Wives, submit yourself to your own husbands as unto the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the Head of the Church, which is His body; and He is the Savior, Deliverer

and Provider of the body. In exactly the same manner as the Church is subject to Christ, even so let their wives be to their own husbands in everything in the marriage estate.

Husbands, LOVE your wives in exactly the same manner as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself up for her in order that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of the water through the Word of God; that He might place her beside Himself of the glorious, untarnished Church, not having a single spot or stain, wrinkle or blemish, or any such thing, but that she might be consecrated Holy and completely blameless.

In exactly the same manner, the husbands are duty-bound and under obligation to God to love their wives as their own bodies. The man who is loving his wife in this manner loves himself, because no one truly hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it exactly as the Lord does the Church.

For we are members of His very own body, of His very own flesh (through His crucifixion and all that means)...

Now, let me just stop here and let's turn to Ephesians, the fifth chapter, and let's look at that verse. The first time I read this, I had a very difficult time understanding this.

Ephesians 5:30: "For we are members of His body—... [We understand that. You're baptized into one spirit into one body—correct?] ...of His flesh... [It doesn't say spirit.] ...and of His bones." What does it mean, of *His flesh and of His bones*? How are we to understand that?

I've studied on that and thought on that and all of a sudden it dawned on me: What is the rib? A *bone*! So what this is telling us and why I gave this explanation here: We are members of His very own body, because they are to become one—the Church and Christ are to be one and one in the Father; of His very own flesh through the crucifixion and all that that means. It couldn't be possible without Jesus coming in the flesh and having died; and of His bones because the Church is a spiritual creation for the same reason that Adam's wife was created from his own rib, so also is a counterpart for Christ: the Church is created from His innermost being.

That was the best I could understand it, and I think that has a lot of meaning when you put it together that we are to be one.

This mystery is great, immense and supreme. For I am speaking concerning the relationship between Christ and the Church (the bride of Jesus Christ and their eternal destiny). However, let each one of you also be loving his own wife as himself and the wife see that she reverence her husband (Eph. 5:22-33).

The Apostle Peter continues God's instructions, "In the same way, you wives be submissive to your own husbands.... from your heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quite spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. Thus did Sarah obey Abraham calling him 'lord.' And you have become her daughters if you do what is right.

Likewise, you husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, and grant her honor as a fellow-heir of the grace of life so that your prayers may not be hindered" (1-Pet. 3:1-7).

Your Sacred Marriage Covenant:

We are here today in the presence of God, coming before His very throne in heaven above and we're asking God to join you as husband and wife. Therefore, in accordance with God's Word, each of you should solemnly promise before God, in the presence of these witnesses to accept the sacred marriage covenant according to the conditions set forth and imposed by Almighty God as revealed in His Holy Word.

Do you (his first name) enter into covenant with God in the presence of these witnesses, to take (bride's full name) to be your lawful wedded wife unto death; and as the Scriptures command, for better or for worse, in sickness or in health, in want or in wealth, to cleave to her, to love her, as Christ loves the Church, to honor her and cherish her and provide for her?

I Do!

In going over it before the actual ceremony I tell them to wait until the dollars come up—*provide for her*. Because in the end-run it's going to cost you!

Now then, do you (her first name) enter into covenant with God...

What it is, it's not a marriage of the state. It's not a marriage of the Church. It is a marriage before God! If more people understood that when they're

entering into it, that it's a covenant, then it would help them over the rougher times, because they're not looking for the escape hatch to get out some way.

You can have that. Someone will say, 'I'm looking for an escape hatch. I'm kind of bored at home here, I think I'll do the tour of the local discos around here. You know sure enough it's about over at that point. But if you have it so that it's this way, you're making a covenant. A covenant is something you do or you die. There's no in-between. There's no getting out of a covenant. That's why Christ died.

...in the presence of these witnesses to take (his full name) to be your lawful wedded husband, until death, as the Scriptures command, for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, in want or in wealth, and to submit yourself to him as unto the Lord in everything in the marriage estate as the Church does to Christ, and to honor and reverence him?

I do!

Since we're asking God to join you as husband and wife, and praying for His binding and blessing of this marriage, it is appropriate to follow the Biblical example of laying on of hands to set you apart for this sacred covenant.

So then, I will now join your right hands for the laying on of my hands on their right hands and with the laying on of my hands, we will ask God to join you as husband and wife.

Let us kneel.

(special prayer blessing the marriage)

This is why it's very important for any elder who is performing a wedding, that you get to know them so that you can have your heart into the prayer. Not just a mechanical thing. This is something to where we need to feel the presence of God with His Spirit. We need to have honor and beauty with the words of God, we need to honor them who are being married to have a prayer from the heart that is going to be special.

Also, there are many people there, there are cameras going, there are videos going and they want to take this home and remember it for the rest of their lives as it were. When that is done,

Presentation of the rings,

You may kiss the bride!

By the authority vested in me as a minister of Jesus Christ, in the name of Jesus Christ I now pronounce you husband and wife.

Then there's the marriage certificate that we have.

FUNERALS

As I mentioned before, these should be adjusted to the circumstances. I'm real happy that you asked me to do something for it, because I've had this in mind to do something and this is something I've thought on.

One night I was watching Discovery Channel—that's about the only thing left, everything else is bore! You've got all the sports, sweat, blood and all the vanity that goes with that.

The Discovery Channel showed this herd of elephants. They're supposed to be one of the most intelligent animals on earth, which they undoubtedly are. One of their own dies and they don't know what to do. They come over and smell it, and kind of rub the paw on it and don't know what to do. They kind of look around and if something disturbs them they give their trumpet call and get all mad and sooner or later they just walk away. Human beings are the only ones that gather together when someone has died.

When you have a funeral you have the name of the deceased, the obituary, eulogy for the deceased can be presented by friends or relatives of the deceased, depending on their wishes.

The Memorial:

This service is unique occasion. Of all the creatures which God has created, only human beings assemble together to honor their dead and to give a remembrance of a loved one who has died. Also, we all know that just as there is life, death is also a reality of life.

Because death is so final, grief fills our hearts over the loss of a loved one, regardless of the circumstances of its occurrence. Death brings us face-to-face with the reality that human life is temporary. With death, we are confronted with the ultimate weakness of human beings. The helplessness and futility that a life has come to an end and no human being of him or herself has the power to escape death or to overcome death, except our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, our Creator the Lord God has revealed in the Holy Scriptures that this physical life, which we now possess in the flesh, is temporary. As Moses wrote, "The days of our years are threescore and ten, and if by reason of strength they be fourscore (Psa. 90:10), but as the

Scriptures reveal, it has been give to all human beings to die once. “It is appointed unto men once to die.... For in Adam we all die” (Heb. 9:27; 1-Cor. 15:22).

After Adam and Eve had sinned, thereby bringing death to all their progeny—to all mankind in all ages—God said to Adam, “For dust you are and unto dust you shall return” (Gen. 3:19). So we are all physical, we are all dust. Moreover, at the time of death, one’s “breath goes forth, he returns to the earth, to the dust, in that very day his thoughts perish” (Psa. 146:4).

In the face of death, all mankind has wondered and asked this question: Is there life after death? In the Scriptures we find that Job asked this same question: “If a man die shall he live again?” (Job 14:14). That is why death is such a mystery! No one, except Jesus Christ, has returned from the dead to eternal life.

Furthermore, the Scriptures teach us that death is an enemy. Yes, the last enemy to be destroyed through the power of the resurrection, as revealed in God’s great plan.

So then, the Scriptures reveal that there is life after death. And this life is in Christ Jesus—in Him and Him alone! Jesus Christ said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.... I am the Resurrection and the Life” (John 14:6; 11:25).

Job understood this profound Truth of God, because he answered his own question: “If a man die shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time [in the grave] I will wait until my change come. You shall call and I shall answer You; You will have a desire of the work of Your hand” (Job 14:14-15).

Just as we all die in Adam, “Even so in Christ shall all be made alive [by the power of the resurrection]. But everyone in his own order” (1-Cor. 15:22-23).

God the Father has given the power and the authority of the resurrection to Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “Truly, truly I say to you, the hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that shall hear shall live. For as the Father has life in Himself, also has He given to the Son to have life in Himself. And He [the Father] has given Him [the Son] authority to execute judgment also because He is the Son of

man. Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in which all that are in the grave shall hear His voice. And they shall come forth: they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:25-29).

At this time the vast majority of people have not been called of God to receive the gift of eternal life. But in God’s great plan for all mankind as revealed in the Scripture, they will all be resurrected to be granted a calling to eternal life.

Moreover, God has made provision in His plan for all of those who have not been called in this life, and for all those who have died untimely deaths—in infancy, in accidents, in disaster or in disease—they shall be resurrected to a new life in the flesh. This new life in the flesh is revealed in the book of Ezekiel. “Therefore, prophesy and say unto them, thus says the Lord God, ‘Behold, all My people, I will cause you come up out of your graves and you shall know that I am the Lord when I have opened your graves, oh My people, and brought you up out of your graves and put My Spirit in you and you shall live’” (Ezek. 37:11-14).

Because God is Love, He “...is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2-Pet. 3:9). And again, “Who will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the Truth” (1-Tim. 2:4). Therefore, God the Father in His great wisdom and profound love has provided that even if one dies without the knowledge of salvation, He will resurrect each person to a new life in the flesh. This is for all those whom He has not called at this time before the return of Jesus Christ.

So, there is hope—GREAT HOPE—for all mankind! God Himself will undo every evil, end every sorrow, conquer every death through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Therefore, we can have great comfort in the Lord Jesus Christ and His love and in His plan for all of those who have died and have not been called to salvation in their lifetimes.

However, those who have been called during their lifetimes and have died in the faith—in Christ Jesus—will be raised to eternal life with eternal glory at His second coming! This is why Jesus Christ said, “I

am the Way, the Truth and the Life... and the Resurrection.” While we have our sins forgiven through the death and blood of Jesus Christ, the faithful in Christ who died “shall be saved by His life,” because He Himself was raised from the dead by the power of the Father.

“But now is Christ raised from the dead and become the Firstfruit of them that slept [in Christ Jesus]. For since by man came death [the Son of man] came also the resurrection from the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive, but every man in his own order. Christ the Firstfruit, afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming. Then comes the end, when He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father. He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power, for He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet. **The last enemy that shall be destroyed IS DEATH**” (1-Cor. 15:20-26).

The very reason for the resurrection of the dead is to destroy death—the last enemy. “So also is the resurrection of the dead. “It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body.

“As it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul. The last Adam was made a quickening spirit. The first man is of the earth, earthy. The second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such as they also they that are earthy. As is the heavenly, such are they that are heavenly. As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

“This I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. Neither does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and **WE SHALL BE CHANGED!**” (1-Cor. 15:42-52).

The Apostle John wrote that because of the love of God the Father, all those who are in Christ and die in the faith will be raised with a glorious spirit body. “Behold, what

glorious love the Father has given to us that we should be called the children of God. Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that if He shall be revealed at His second coming, that we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Everyone who has this hope in him is purifying himself as He is pure” (1-John 3:1-2).

God wants us to rejoice in His revealed hope for the dead. We are not to be sorrowful and grieve. The Apostle Paul wrote: “I do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep... [that is, those who have died] ...so that you be not grieved as the rest who have no hope. If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also those who have fallen asleep in Jesus God will bring up again from the dead together with Him. For this we are telling you by the Word of the Lord that we who are living and remain until the coming of the Lord shall in no wise precede them who have fallen asleep.

“Because the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a proclamation of command, with the voice of archangels and with the trumpet of God and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we also, who are still living, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds for the meeting of the Lord in the air, and we shall always be with the Lord. So then, encourage each other with these words” (1-Thess. 4:13-18).

As the Scriptures reveal to us, death and the corruption of the flesh will be overcome. “For it is necessary that this corruption put on incorruptibility, for this mortal must put on immortality. But when this corruption shall have put on incorruptibility, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying which has been written, ‘**DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY!**’” (1-Cor. 15:53-54).

Death will be destroyed! Death is the last enemy and it will be conquered. The ultimate love of God the Father will be clearly manifest. God the Father will give eternal life to all those who are in Christ Jesus His Son. He will accomplish it through the power of the resurrection, and by His profound love and grace for each one He calls.

As the Apostle Paul wrote: “For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ of Whom the whole family of heaven and earth is named. That He may give you according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; for Christ to dwell in your hearts through faith; being rooted and grounded in love; may be fully able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length, and depth and height and to know the love of Christ which passes any human knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God, even to Him Who has the power above all things to do, exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power which is working in us. Now to Him be the glory and the Church in Christ Jesus into all the ages of eternity, Amen” (Eph. 3:14-21).

The Apostle John was given this vision of the coming new heaven and earth where the children of God will live forever with the Lord:

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away and there is no longer any sea. I John, saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men. Men made perfect through Jesus Christ. He shall tabernacle with them and they shall be His people and they God Himself shall be with them, even their own God. And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death shall be no longer, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor disease shall be there any longer, because the former things are passed away.’

“He Who is sitting on the throne said, ‘Write.’ Because these words are true and faithful and He said to me, ‘It is done! I am Alpha, Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, and I will give to the one who is thirsting from the fountain of the water of life freely. The one who overcomes shall inherit all things and I will be His God and he shall be My son” (Rev. 21:1-7).

Thus is fulfilled the plan of God as expressed in John 3:16, which says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever is

believing on Him may not perish, but have everlasting life—Amen.”

Then give a closing prayer. If there is an internment at the grave site, then another short prayer should be given to commit the body into the grave and into the hands of God.

The other outline is for someone who has died in the faith.

I think it would be good that everybody who has the Spirit of God and affiliates with us, I think it would be nice if they all had that. Not that they would use it officially, but that they can have it. Then you consider that we have something that was never given to the Church members, which is the Passover Ceremony.

If we build these things up and if we develop the kind of studies and literature that is to up-build the brethren, that’s going to help them and inspire them and is going to do so in a complete way, I think that God will bless what we’re going to do.

The days of having salvation by pamphlet is over. Those can be thrown away and changed at the drop of a hat. Today, everybody, even the world, is sharp on every single word you say. They’ve been trained with that with the media and television and things like this. They’re being overwhelmed with knowledge from the world. We need to have things that are in depth.

I had one man call me and said, ‘I need all of your translations that you have done.’ I said, ‘You don’t know what you’re asking for, but I’ll tell you.

This is good, because then people can study. The whole purpose of someone teaching the brethren of God is so that they can have a relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ. It is not to glorify the minister or have a priesthood to exclude the knowledge of God and give you so much because that’s all you’re worthy of.

We need to teach and up-build the brethren, because God the Father has called them, and that’s plenty worthy enough—isn’t it? In that then we should all become teachers. How can a woman teach? That doesn’t mean she’s going to preach publicly, but can she not go through the Bible like Pricilla did and show this and that and the other thing and help other people? In that then we should all become teachers. How can a woman teach? That doesn’t mean she’s going to preach publicly, but can she not go through the Bible like Pricilla did and show this and that and the other thing and help other people? *Yes, without a doubt!* There’s no doubt!

Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred. R. Coulter

Scriptural References:

- 14) 1 Timothy 2:4
- 15) Ephesians 3:14-21
- 16) Revelation 21:1-7

Baptism

- 1) John 4:1-2
- 2) John 6:44
- 3) Romans 2:4
- 4) Matthew 3:1-10
- 5) Luke 14:25-27
- 6) Romans 8:9
- 7) Luke 14:33
- 8) Matthew 10:32-39
- 9) Romans 6:1-16, 18

Also referenced: Booklet:

The Funeral Ceremony for The Christian Biblical Church of God

FRC:bo
Transcribed: 7-16-11

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Acts 1
- Psalm 51; 86
- Revelation 2; 3
- Hebrews 4:12
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- *The Christian Passover* by Fred R. Coulter
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Sermon Series: *Scripturalism vs Judaism*

Marriage:

Scriptural References:

- 1) Ephesians 5:30; 22-33
- 2) 1 Peter 8:1-7

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Scriptural References:

- 1) Psalm 90:10
- 2) Hebrews 9:27
- 3) 1 Corinthians 15:22
- 4) Genesis 3:19
- 5) Psalm 146:4
- 6) Job 14:14
- 7) John 14:6
- 8) John 11:25
- 9) Job 14:14-15
- 10) 1 Corinthians 15:22-23
- 11) John 5:25-29
- 12) Ezekiel 37:11-14
- 13) 2 Peter 3:9