



“God’s Ancient Landmarks”

Part I

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It’s a great pleasure to be with you for another time of Bible study. Thanks for joining me today. Our scripture reading comes from the **Proverbs**. In fact, the statement that we will read is found in two proverbs of Solomon, as well as twice in the book of **Deuteronomy**, once in the book of **Job** and once in **Hosea**. We’ll use the passage in **Proverbs** as the beginning point in our study.

Proverbs 22:28 “Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.”

We’re familiar with landmarks even today. They were especially useful a few years ago before the advent of GPS and even more so before modern mapping gave us a bigger view of the world. It was quite common just a few years ago to give someone directions by referring to landmarks that he/she would pass along the way. But when the Bible refers to landmarks, it is not speaking of a reference in giving directions; rather, an object--usually a stone or pile of stones--that marked a property line. Those lines were sacred. In other words, a *landmark* served as a *boundary*. God was very strict about these boundaries and borders that were set up in ancient times. So much so that He pronounced a curse upon those who would move them in order to advantage themselves. Today, I want us to think about boundaries that God Himself has set up and see if men have moved those ancient boundaries in modern times.

When the Israelites inherited the promised land, God allotted each tribe a place to settle and dwell within. Each family was appointed a certain amount of land and that land was divided not by a fence, but by landmarks. These were usually stones arranged on the ground to show a property line. God gave a stern warning to the children of Israel concerning those landmarks.

Deuteronomy 19:14 “Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it.”

Deuteronomy 27:17 “Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark. And all the people shall say, Amen.”

Those landmarks were to remain undisturbed and were not to be encroached upon, not only in that generation, but throughout their generations to come. When God established those landmarks, they were to remain.

Now we come to the book of **Proverbs**, written by Solomon several hundred years later. He refers to them as **ancient landmarks**. That is, the landmarks that dated back to the Israelites' settlement of Canaan. Note that even though several centuries had passed, God still recognized those original boundaries and condemned those who took advantage of their neighbor by moving them.

Proverbs 23:10 “Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless:”

Later, in the prophecy of **Hosea**, God likens the corrupt and sinful princes of Judah to those who would remove the bound.

Hosea 5:10 “The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound: therefore I will pour out my wrath upon them like water.”

That was God's reaction to those in that old dispensation who infringed upon the domain and right of another. But God has ancient landmarks which are not to be removed either. The fact that sin exists implies that God has boundaries that we are forbidden to cross. One of the ways that the Bible defines sin is found in **I John 3:4**:

I John 3:4 “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”

The word *transgress* means *to go beyond*. In other words, to sin means to cross over a line or boundary that God has drawn or set. First of all, we need to be aware that God has set those boundaries and not us. It's not up to us to determine where they are; God makes that determination. Right vs. wrong is an objective thing; NOT subjective. God has laid down the landmarks that delineate between right and wrong, righteousness and unrighteousness. What good is a boundary if people can just arbitrarily move it as they see fit?

If you own a piece of property, you might have a fence that marks that line. But that fence is merely a reflection of what the recorded deed says. That deed clearly delineates the boundaries of your property. What if someone could just come and dig up your fence, move it a few feet inward, and claim that property for themselves? Of course, you wouldn't stand for that because that property line is a matter of legal right and it is properly YOUR domain, YOUR property, and YOUR sovereign sphere.

God has established the boundaries between what is right, what is within His will and what is wrong or outside of His will. We don't have any more right to move those boundaries than someone has the right to come along and move the landmarks of your property.

Also notice that God's landmarks are ancient.

Proverbs 22:28 "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set."

In other words, the boundary doesn't change from one generation to the next. It didn't in regard to the property rights of the Israelites, and the boundary does not change spiritually when it comes to God's will. God's landmarks were set in ancient times and we're not to remove them. Those landmarks are established in God's immutable and unchanging word. His boundaries do not drift or change from generation to generation. They remain the same as when God established them, and they will remain in place until Jesus comes again.

I Peter 1:24-25 "...The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

I want to look at some ancient landmarks that God has set. Let's first consider the landmark of salvation. If being saved and being lost are two totally opposite things, there must be a line between them. There must be a point one crosses from being lost to being saved. It's not a gradual process; you're not partially saved and partially lost and get a little more saved as you go along. You're either saved or you're lost today. You're either IN Christ or you're OUT OF Christ. The Bible teaches that salvation is found only in Christ.

John 14:6 "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Romans 8:1 "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Now, forgiveness of sin, and thus salvation, must take place in the mind of God before it can rightly be enjoyed in the mind of man. I want to repeat that: the forgiveness of sin, and thus salvation, MUST take place in the mind of God before it can rightly be enjoyed in the mind of man. In other words, God declares us saved. We don't declare ourselves saved. A person is saved because God deems him/her as saved and not because they decide that they themselves are saved. It takes place in God's mind. You can say that you're saved all day long, but that doesn't mean that you are. Only God can declare that a person has been forgiven of their sins and is in a right relationship with Him.

So, the question is this: when does God do that? When does God make that declaration? We just read that one must be *in Christ* in order to be saved, to escape condemnation. That means that those who are outside of Christ are not saved. If those who are in Christ are those who are saved, then those who are outside of Christ are those who are not saved. They are lost. You really can't make it any simpler than that. They may be upstanding people in the community. They may be kind, caring, compassionate people toward others. They may be full of good works and charitable deeds. But they are still lost if they are outside of Christ.

God has determined that those who are in Christ are reconciled to Him and those who are outside of Christ are estranged from Him, regardless of how morally upright, devout, or religious they may be. A lot of people want to come along and move that landmark. Many want to renegotiate this and say that

people who may not be Christians, who don't necessarily follow Christ and His teachings may be saved as well, but that's not what Jesus said.

John 14:6 "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

This begs the question, when does one enter Christ? If one must be in Christ to be saved, how does one get into Christ? Does it happen when one believes? Many churches and preachers—in fact, the majority of them—will tell you that that is when one is saved. But is that where the Bible says that God has placed the boundary and landmark? Do you enter Christ when you repent of your sins? Do you enter Christ when you achieve a certain level of goodness or religious zealotry, however you measure that? What does the Bible say?

Galatians 3:27 "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

Friend, people who preach salvation without baptism are moving an ancient landmark. Whenever you read of people in the New Testament dispensation hearing the gospel preached and responding to it in faith, it always says that their response to the gospel immediately included baptism. Paul makes it very clear.

Romans 6:17-18 "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."

You see where God placed that line? The line between being lost in sin and being free from sin was crossed when they ***obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine***. What is Paul talking about? How did they obey that form of doctrine? Let's think that through. The word *form* means a *mold* or *likeness*. So, he says that they obeyed a mold or likeness of the doctrine. The word *doctrine* simply refers to *teaching*. So, they obeyed a likeness of what they had been taught. What were they taught that caused them to be led out of sin and into freedom from their sin? What is the message whereby we are saved? Paul himself tells us:

I Corinthians 15:1-4 "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:"

Paul said that the gospel he had preached, that the Corinthians had received and by which they were saved was that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. Now, that's the teaching that one must hear and believe before he can be saved. That is the means by which Christ procured our salvation. So, back to **Romans 6:17**.

Romans 6:17-18 "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."

Paul said that the Romans were at one time sinners but were then made free from sin. There's our line, our boundary. He says that they had obeyed from the heart a form or likeness of the doctrine or the gospel they had been taught. In other words, they had obeyed some commandment of God that served as a likeness of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is something they obeyed, and the commandment was in the likeness of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. And that was the line: ***being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.***

Can you think of something that the Bible commands of believing, penitent sinners that pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ? We'll stay in **Romans 6** to find the answer.

Romans 6:3-5 "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:"

How were they made free from sin? By the blood of Christ, by the atoning work of Christ upon the cross, by the power of His resurrection. But WHEN were they made free from sin? The message of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection was preached to them, but when did that message save them? When they were baptized, Paul says, into Christ. In the likeness of His death, burial, and resurrection. When people take the position that those who don't believe in Jesus will be saved, they are moving the ancient landmark of salvation. But also, when people tell you that you're saved *before* baptism into Christ or *without* baptism and so forth, can't we see that they are also moving the landmark of salvation? They're not allowed to do that. God placed that line of demarcation and we don't have the authority or the power to move it. I can't will a person saved and neither can you. I can't pronounce a person saved and neither can you. Neither of us can declare ourselves saved. We can't place that line where we want it. God has placed that line in the revelation of the gospel, and He said this:

Mark 16:16 "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Now, that is the line. ***He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*** That's where God put the line and set the landmark. Remove not the ancient landmarks.

But then there are those who have removed the ancient landmark of God's pattern for worship. Some allege that God has no such boundaries for worship; that however you want to worship is fine and that as long as it comes from a sincere heart, God will accept it. Is that true? Will God accept all worship?

Colossians 2:23 "Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship..."

Here, Paul condemns what he calls "***will worship,***" which refers to worship according to one's own will instead of God's. Worshipping as you see fit instead of the way God requires. Jesus said that God must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

John 4:24 "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Did you know that there has never—NEVER—been a time when God left it up to man to devise his own means of approaching and worshipping God? You may say, *well, under the law of Moses, God had certain ceremonies that men were enjoined to keep and follow in a certain way, but we've been freed from all of that.* Yes, we've been freed from the ceremonies of the old law but predating the old law and going all the way back to the beginning, God has never left it to man to devise his own means of approaching and worshipping Him.

God has revealed the kind of worship that He desires and that He will accept. God, in other words, has given us in His word the landmarks that distinguish between those things which are holy and belong to Him and those things that are profane and are not to be used in His service.

Cain tried to move the ancient landmark when he brought the wrong kind of offering to the Lord and laid it upon the altar.

Genesis 4:3-5 *And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell."*

God required blood sacrifice, but Cain offered Him vegetables instead. Abel brought a bloody sacrifice, as God had specified. The Lord respected Abel and his offering, but the Bible says that unto Cain and his offering, God had not respect. From that point forward, religion that originates in the mind and the will of man is referred to as "*the way of Cain*" and not the way of faith.

Jude 11 *"Woe unto them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core."*

Hebrews 11:4 *"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain..."*

Why? Abel followed God's instructions because *faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17)*. Cain did something besides what God had commanded and his worship was rejected.

The priests Nadab and Abihu moved the ancient landmark when they offered *strange fire* to the Lord. God had said that the fire for burning incense was to come from the coals beneath the altar, but they substituted something else. "*Strange fire*" the Bible calls it. What else happened?

Leviticus 10:1-2 *"And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord."*

God made an example out of them before the nation of Israel, that it was serious business to God how He is worshipped. He meant what He said in His word. It wasn't negotiable. And God means what He says today. God's word means something today. When the Bible tells us how the church in the days of the apostles assembled and worshipped God, those things weren't written by accident. They were placed within the text by divine inspiration, and they furnish us with a pattern for how the church is to be organized, how it is to function, and how it is to worship today.

I ask this question: if that is NOT the case, if the Bible does not provide any pattern for worship, how are we to know how to worship? Will God just accept anything that is called worship? Are we just free to do as we please? Friend, the word of God, from the very first book of Genesis until the last writing of an apostle tells us something entirely different. Now, does God specify every detail of worship? No. But we are limited by what He DOES specify in His word. And we're not allowed to invent ways to worship God. We are to do what God has said to do, and we are bound by that which He has specified within that command.

If the Bible says we're to do something, and then instructs us by command or by approved example of how that command is to be carried out, then in effect God has placed a landmark there, you see. When the Bible says, for example, that the church is to assemble together and be taught by one man at a time with the women keeping silent, we are limited as to how the church is to teach when it comes together. We must do so within those parameters.

I Corinthians 14:23 "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?"

I Corinthians 14:31 "For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted."

I Corinthians 14:34 "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law."

It doesn't matter if we meet in a home, a rented place, or a permanent structure. We are still to carry out the instructions of Paul according to the regulations that he lays down. If we divide the congregation and have different ones simultaneously teaching and have women participating in that teaching, we are then violating what Paul said.

I hope you'll be with me next week because we will continue on with that idea and also talk about the ancient landmarks of fellowship and holiness. Please make plans to join us then for another study from the word of God.

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