

# THE BAPTIST LANDMARK

“REMOVE NOT THE ANCIENT LANDMARK, WHICH THY FATHERS HAVE SET.” PROVERBS 22:28

VOLUME NUMBER 4

MARCH 17, 2019

ISSUE NUMBER 1

## OUR FIRST LOVE

by H. B. Little

In the second and third chapters of The Revelation, John records a final admonition to the New Testament Church. This instruction was written to the seven churches of Asia. For two of the churches, the instruction was that of encouragement. For the remaining five, it was that of rebuke with a call to repent. This article will expound upon the instruction to the Ephesian Church contained in Rev. 2:1-7.

The Lord begins His message to the Ephesians with, “I know thy works.” This should come as no surprise. The Lord is all knowing. “The eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.” Zec. 4:9. He sees every effort and action of His children and His churches.

As the Lord describes the efforts of His Ephesian Church, He praises their patient, hard labor. He praises their intolerance of evil. This they learned of the Apostle Paul, who taught them to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.” Eph. 5:11. The Lord further praises their doctrinal knowledge, saying they had “tried them” claiming to be gospel teachers and “found them liars.” In spite of all this praise, the Lord says “I have *somewhat* against thee...”

Old-Time Baptist churches bear many similarities with the Ephesian Church. At times, we patiently labor with souls in weeks of revival—sometimes day and night. Our churches send and support missionaries in difficult fields. Our churches are known for the discipline of willfully erring members who walk in “the unfruitful works of darkness.” This we learned from our Lord and His apostles. We have retained their doctrine which teaches “put away from among yourselves that wicked person”, 1 Co 5:13. We are similarly known for our willingness to try the doctrines and practices of those professing to be gospel teachers and churches. When we find them teaching and practicing gross error (e.g., deception of sinners, alien baptism, etc.), we follow the Apostle Paul’s instruction “from such withdraw

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## THE SNARE OF THE DEVIL

by M. A. Brawner

The word of God is careful to warn us of the snares the devil, 2 Ti. 2:26. There are many of these and, with the light provided by the scriptures, they can be detected. Questions commonly surface when we engage in discussing such subjects. This article will attempt to take up a few questions and offer answers from God’s word.

It makes sense that some may ask what exactly is a snare? A snare is a type of trap. It is usually made of something like a strong wire that is flexible enough to not break. Think of a guitar or piano string. One end of a snare is attached to an object that is firmly planted in the ground like a bush or even a stob. The other end is formed into a loop big enough to allow an animal’s foot to easily enter it. The snare is placed along a path so that the animal taking normal steps walking down it would step into the snare and get caught. The loop closes as the poor creature pulls against it. The more it pulls, the tighter the snare gets cutting into the flesh and holding it firm. Of course, when we convert that picture to the snare of the devil, we know he is out to catch men, women, boys, and girls. He sets his snares along the paths of our daily lives to catch and trap us.

With a snare briefly described, some might ask what a snare of the devil would look like for a lost person. Certainly, the devil has many snares in which to trap lost mankind. Let’s consider one that is very common and easy to detect. In Acts chapter 24, we read of an occasion when Felix met with the Apostle Paul. Paul reasoned with Felix of righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come, verse 25. The Bible tells us that Felix trembled at what he heard. Rather than surrendering to God on the spot, he told Paul, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee”. This response of Felix allows us to see the snare in which the devil caught him. Felix, like so many today, chose to put God off rather than surrendering to His will. Delay is a stumbling block which is

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## IN THE BEGINNING

by Greg Dunham

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.” Gen. 1:1-3.

The Scriptures here define the beginning. This is not the beginning of God, because He is from everlasting to everlasting, but rather it is the beginning of history. There was, before this point, no time. Time is here established as we see in verse, 5 “And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.” Before this, there was no need for time, as only God and the Angels existed. God being eternal, He had no need of it. However, man, as a mortal being, needed the concept of time to mark the shortness of his days.

Let’s then consider the beginning. Verse 1 tells us that, in the beginning of time and creation, God created the Heavens and the Earth. In verse 2 though we find that the Earth was without form, meaning it had no shape, structure or cohesiveness. It physically did not exist. Further it is described as being void, which means without substance and wanting. Taken together we find the earth was, at this time, in a state of nothingness. It had no substance, no structure, and no form. How then do we reconcile verse 1 that says God created the heaven and earth?

The Bible’s idea of creation is different from the world’s idea of creation. The world says a craftsman takes a piece of wood and creates some useful thing from it. Not to diminish the skill of the craftsman, but this is not creation. What man does is the repurposing of a material for another use. The material to be used is already in existence. The repurposed material used by the craftsman came from a piece of wood, that came from a tree, that grew from a seed, that grew up being nurtured by the earth.

The material had already been prepared by God, but when God made the Earth He

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formed it out of nothing. This is Creation: taking nothing (void) and causing there to be something. Still, even in the mind of God, there must be a conception of the thing to be created. Notice Gen. 1:26, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..." Clearly God had a design in mind before causing the dust of the earth to come together and form man. Man, the Sun, the fowls of the air, the beasts of the field, the trees and grass, yea even earth itself was clearly seen in the mind of God before they were created.

In the beginning then God conceived, or "created" in His mind, the Heaven and the Earth and all things therein. We see the scripture declaring the divine plan of God and its far-reaching implications in Isaiah 46:10. There it is stated that God is "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure". This shows that in the mind of God there was a clear understanding of eternity future and all things that would lead to it. God knew from before the foundation of the earth that man would transgress His law in Eden, plunging himself and his posterity into ruin. God understood what it would take to redeem you and me. In Rev. 5 He shows John that before the world, before time as we know it, Christ stood as a Lamb. God's plan has always been to have a people and be unto them a God. Yet in our ruined state, we absolutely fall short. We need a redeemer to bring us back into a right standing with God. This is a central theme of the Scriptures.

In Rev. 3:14, where John speaks to the Laodicean church, he refers to Christ being the "beginning of the creation of God..." We know Christ, being God, was not created but like the Father and Spirit is self-existent. He is, however, the beginning of creation or, according to Strong's definitions, the corner of creation. This is the thought found in Eph. 2:20, "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" and 1 Pe. 2:6 "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded." So, He is the Chief Cornerstone of creation. He is that upon

which all else stands, making Him the foundation of the creation itself.

Returning to Genesis 1:3 "God said let there be light, and there was light." In John 1:4 we learn that "the light," which is Christ, is the "light of men." Without this light there can be no life. So, before God physically created the earth, while the creation was only in the mind of God, Christ had already accepted the responsibility of being the Redeemer. In Rev. 5 we see the Lamb taking the book from Him that sat upon the throne. He was the only one who could possibly do this, for strict search had already been made. No man in heaven, or in earth, or under the earth was found worthy. But the Lamb prevailed to take the book and to loose the seven seals thereof. This book, I believe, contains the destiny of all mankind which could not be opened or realized until the Lamb took the book and opened it.

In Ephesians 3:8-9, Paul speaks of his unworthiness to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ and "to make men see what is the fellowship of the mystery." God, in His infinite wisdom, determined to begin revealing the Mystery from the inception of creation. He declared, "let there be light." This is not a physical light, but "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world", John 1:9. God declared His Son, Christ the redeemer, before He formed the world.

So, we see the beginning of Creation itself is a manifestation of the Grace of God. He knew, before He formed us, what manner of men we would be. He saw the fall of humanity and knew the dire consequences that came with sin. Yet God loved humanity so much that, before we were created, He not only had a plan in mind but declared that plan in saying "Let there be light." When God declared this light to be, Genesis responds "and there was light." So, the plan that Christ would come, suffer in our stead, and offer himself as a sacrifice for all was established. This was not just in word, but it came into being immediately at the sound of God's voice declaring it to be so. Therefore when man fell and needed to be redeemed in the garden, the means of redemption were already in place. We see this declared in Rom 5:20, "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Sin abounded in the Garden, but already the plan was fully established, being

created by the voice of God before any other thing. Therefore the Grace that brings salvation to all mankind was available to Adam, Eve, and all humanity. All because in the beginning God said, "let there be light."

**CARROLL'S REPENTANCE**

by H. B. Little

B. H. Carroll (1843-1914) was a Baptist pastor, teacher, author, and founder of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Waco, Texas. Among the causal readers of Baptist history, he is better known as the brother of J. M. Carroll, author of *The Trail of Blood*. B. H. Carroll wrote several books himself. The most notable of them are *An Interpretation of the English Bible* and *Ecclesia-The Church*.

In the fall of 1889, Bro. Carroll preached a sermon before the Waco Association, which was published by that body. It was titled *Repentance and Remission of Sins*. I do not know the historical context in which the sermon was preached, but it is evident, considering the topic and tone of his message, that some were teaching repentance to be a mere act of the mind without mourning. Some were entirely opposed to the mourners' bench. On this topic Bro. Carroll says:

*My brethren, I know there have been hurtful excesses in connection with what has been called the "mourners' bench." They are not to be approved. It should not be exalted...as if God would pardon sinners only there. But let me beg you to take heed that in leaving out the "bench"...you be careful not to leave out the "mourning"...I tell you frankly, I would rather take the "bench" with its unnecessary excesses, than to take a system of mere intellectual faith without the mourning. You may guard against the excesses in the one case, or at least find much good with the bad; but in the latter there is no good...The true penitent is a mourner...many of those who oppose the mourners' bench are prompted in their crusade less by opposition to the bench than by opposition to the prayers there offered...Sermons by B. H. Carroll, pg. 201.*

Bro. Carroll, speaking of the opposers of our altars, compares them to those who departed from the Baptists and are now known as "Churches of Christ." He says:

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causing untold multitudes to stumble off into hell. The devil loves that it is so.

God has set a time and day for mankind to be saved. We learn of this time and day when we read, "...behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation", 2 Cor. 6:2. This verses tells us "Now" is the time and "Now" is the day for salvation. Everyone who has ever been saved had to bring it down to the very moment in which they found themselves. The surrender to God that results in soul salvation is total. There is no putting God off, and there is no desire to go any farther in the lost condition. Felix shunned all of this revealing that he had entered into this snare of the devil.

Some may ask what it would look like for a saved person to be caught in the snare of the devil. It should be well noted that saved people caught in such a snare cannot end up going to hell. When we consider such verses as 1 Cor. 3:15, it is obvious that saved people can commit works resulting in those works being burned up. BUT it is equally obvious that the person will still be saved "yet so as by fire".

God is clear that soul salvation and membership in the Lord's Church are distinct from each other. The devil is certainly interested in keeping saved people out of this true Church. The devil may lose a person's soul, but he knows he can still trap them to ruin their reward and inheritance. So, what does a snare look like for a saved person? Let's consider the ending verses of John chapter 6. Notice that there were many disciples who became dismayed when they heard some of the teachings of the Lord which seemed to them to be "hard sayings", verse 60. The same thing happens today when some saved people hear about the nature of the Lord's Church and the system of doctrine it practices. Verse 66 states that MANY of the disciples went back and would walk no more with the Lord after hearing these teachings. Somehow, the devil can trap a saved person into walking away from the Lord. It is as if the devil suggests to the saved person that there is an easier way to live than what the Lord offers. Though the Lord has told us that His yoke is easy and His burden is light, Matt. 11:30, the devil catches people in the idea that all of this is a lie. So, saved people walk away

having laid hold on some lie of the devil which makes them feel justified in doing so. Woe unto them! Accepting a lie to reject a promise from God must lead to calamity and unnecessary misery, Heb. 12:47.

Some of the people of God, who have found the true Church of God and united to it, find themselves asking if the devil has a snare capable of catching them. There is no doubt that God's people have a safe place to hide from the devil and his ways if they would abide close to the Lord, Jas. 4:7-8. Honestly though, how many of us really live every day of our lives as close to the Lord as we should? Do we NOT find ourselves drifting at times, needing to make a straight path right back to where we should have been all along? The obvious answer is "Yes!" So, what about those members of the Lord's Church who have left out, stayed out, and died without ever returning? Let's recall that if they really were born again that salvation is secure. But doesn't their situation persuade us that the devil has a snare in which he can catch one of the Lord's Church members as well?

Consider what the Lord stated in the parable of the sower as we try to detect one such snare. In Philippians 4:17, Paul expressed his desire for Church members to bear fruit of the Spirit that would abound to their account. But the Lord describes for us in Luke 8:14 how the devil can snare us with "cares and riches and pleasures of this life" to prevent this type of fruit being borne. The devil knows what happens when he seduces a Church member from abiding close to the Lord and bearing fruit of the Spirit (John 15:5). They will end up as described earlier, "saved yet so as by fire". In a day when cares and riches and pleasure are so abundant, it should wake all of us up to the fact that we walk every day where a snare of the devil is close at hand.

Probably one of the most important questions a person can ask in association with this topic relates to how a person can be freed from a snare of the devil. The same answer applies whether a person is lost or saved, a Church member or not. The answer is found in 2 Tim. 2:25-26. When these verses are taken together, we learn that a person must recover themselves out of the snare through repentance. Some have questioned if repentance really applies to a person who has already been born again. By

considering the word of God, it is found that five of the seven Churches in Asia, Rev. 2-3, were called on to repent. Saved people make up true Churches. So then, saved people were called on to repent. It should be easy to conclude that the instructions regarding how to be free from the snare of the devil applies to saved people as well as to those who are lost.

So, what does 2 Timothy teach about being freed from these snares? It teaches that a person must repent to deliver themselves out of the snare. Felix, when brought to trembling by the Spirit of God needed to repent and turn to God for salvation. Those disciples who heard the Lord's teaching, though appearing as "hard to be heard", needed to repent of walking away. Lastly, any member of the Lord's Church who allows themselves to become entangled in the thorns of this life needs to repent to recover themselves out of that snare.

Saved people have temptations of so many forms in this day. The devil is succeeding in snaring and holding multitudes by convincing them that the Lord's way of living and serving is just too hard. Some, in light of this, are adopting different ways in hopes that they will entice worldly minded people to join them. These same people are then left to wonder why the power of God is no longer among them. In this day we need to trust that the ways of the Lord in life and service are as perfect as they ever have been. We may not understand all of them at the outset, but we are convinced He will help us learn what we need to know the more we grow and the longer we serve Him. Let the words of Job be our own, lest we get caught in one of the devil's snares. Job said of the Lord, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him...", Job 13:15. In no wise does this mean that Job thought the Lord was trying to slay him. However, in light of the accusations raised by his friends, this was his response. We should take the same attitude about serving the Lord in this day when faced with opposition. Let us say, "even if this way leads to poverty and loss of life, I will trust the Lord and keep walking in it, because it is His way". God grant us all the grace to do so.

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thyself", 1 Ti 6:5, and "avoid them." Rom. 16:17.

For these practices, the Lord would praise us as He did the Ephesian Church. However, the Lord wanted more of the Ephesian Church than purity of doctrine and practice. For He says to them, "Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love...thou art fallen...repent...or else I will come...and remove thy candlestick". Despite all of their good works, the Ephesian Church stood in serious error and grave danger. The Lord's threat to withdraw from them was not because of doctrine or practice. They were of sound faith and order, but they had left their first love. If the Lord Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever", Heb. 13:8, He requires the same love from our churches today.

What then should be a church's "first love"? Is it a love for one another? Is it a love for unbelievers? Holy Scripture demands a love for both our brethren and unbelievers. But are either of these to be the object of our "first" love? The word "first" here means foremost. It is the love which is first in rank. The one receiving the first love is the one loved most. Who then should be the object of a church's first love?

The Lord Jesus gave us this answer during His personal, earthly ministry. When asked which commandment was first, or greatest, He answered, "Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment." Mar. 12:29-30. In other words, the foremost duty of Israel is to love God. This is the greatest commandment—the most important one. If a love for God is the most important duty of His people, how can the first love of the church be for any other than our Lord and Savior?

Paul compares the love between the Savior and the church to that of a husband and wife. He writes, "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." Eph. 5:30-32. In other words, Paul's

lesson to the Ephesian Church was that the church's first love was for her Husband and Savior.

The Ephesian Church forgot this vital principal and found themselves in the state described by Paul, "And though I...understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith...And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity [a godly love], it profiteth me nothing." 1 Co. 13:2-3. The Lord knew their works, their burdens, and their soundness in doctrine and practice. But He also knew the coldness of their love for Him. Their doctrinal soundness did not excuse their departure from their first love. The Lord's rebuke was clearly this: "these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." Mat. 23:23.

Old-Time Baptist churches ought to value and maintain our purity in doctrine and practice. While doing so, we ought to be mindful that the faith by which we practice only "worketh by love." Gal. 5:7. Solomon declares our love for God as the cause of our seeking His ways. He writes, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest *thy flock* to rest..." Son 1:7. He describes our love for God as our persevering attachment to Him. He writes, "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him...I will rise now, and go...I will seek him whom my soul loveth...I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go", Son. 3:1-4.

As Old-Time Baptist churches, we ought to love God above all else. Where this love slips, so will our desire for the old paths. Where our love grows weak, so will our desire for His presence in our churches. And as His presence wanes, so will our light—our influence and power. Let us all examine ourselves. Is our first and greatest love for our Savior? If not, let us repent and keep the first and great commandment.

**CARROLL'S REPENTANCE**

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*We know that in such a guise a war of this kind was once waged in our camps. God grant that we may not have to fight it over...The records of the strife are in all our libraries. Take down from your shelves J. B. Jeter, A. P. Williams, D. B. Ray, Andrew Broadus, John L. Waller...on one side and Alexander Campbell, Moses E. Lard...on the other side...Put in columns...what is there said about...the mourners'*

*bench...godly sorrow, repentance, and prayer for forgiveness, and see how history repeats itself. Ibid., pg. 201-202.*

Bro. Carroll was correct. How history has repeated itself! Many today, who call themselves Baptists, have accepted Alexander Campbell's repentance. They teach repentance and saving faith to be no more than accepting the gospel as true and committing to a reformed life. The repentance taught by these "Baptists" cannot be distinguished from the repentance taught by those denominated "The Churches of Christ".

Bro. Carroll's views on the nature of repentance can be taken from his own words and ought to be the views of Baptists today.

*The true penitent is a man of prayer—he prays for mercy and forgiveness. This too is said with no bated breath...The true penitent is a seeker and striver after eternal life...fleeing from the wrath to come...The word of God sounds in his ears as the angel's word to Lot: "Escape for thy life"...He hears the evangelical prophet: "Seek ye the Lord...call ye upon Him"...a penitent man mourns, prays, seeks, and strives for eternal life...all who deny such exercises as characteristic of the penitent do misrepresent that grace of God by which we are saved, and do impugn the necessity and power of the Holy Ghost which induces them. Ibid., pg. 202-205.*

**BOOKS FOR SALE**

The Baptist Landmark continues to offer the following books at our cost. They are:

*Trail of Blood*, by J. M. Carroll. This book contains a brief history of the Baptists and a nice chart mapping our lineage from the New Testament age. Format: Paperback. Length: 60 pages. Price: \$3 + shipping

*Baptist Succession*, by D. B. Ray. This book sets the record straight on the 1641 Discovery, the Roger Williams Church, the matter of John Smith, and others. It also introduces the reader to the ancient Baptists. Format: Hardback. Length: 396 Pages. Price: \$10 + \$3 shipping

*History of the Welsh Baptists*, by J. Davis. This book contains the history of the Baptists in Wales from the year 63 to 1778. Interestingly, some of the oldest churches in the South have traced their origins to a church which migrated from Wales. Format: Hardback. Length: 204 pages. Price: \$5 + \$3 shipping

Orders can be taken by mail or email.