

February Questions and Answers

Franklin Church of Christ
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PM Worship

Introduction:

We have several questions submitted this month. I believe we will be able to cover four of them.

Discussion:

- I. What is the meaning of “mansions” in **John 14:2**?
 - A. This question stems from one we discussed last month regarding degrees of reward in heaven. One brother commented that this mistaken concept of degrees in heaven probably stems from misunderstanding “mansions” in **John 14:2**. I believe he was correct.
 - B. The word translated “mansion” is the Greek word “mone.” That word simply means “a staying.” It does not mean a golden house that is silver lined. Evidently, our English translation came from the word used in the Latin, “mansiones,” which in the Latin, on into Middle English, also simply meant a dwelling place. Thus, “mansion” is not a mistranslation so much as it is a word that has grown broader than its original meaning and use in this passage.
 - C. Jesus was not saying that He was preparing elaborate houses for us in heaven. Rather, He was saying there is room in God’s house for all of us. The statement was all the more meaningful since He had just warned the apostles of their coming sin of abandoning Him. His point was that through His death, a way into heaven would be provided to each of us, even the worst sinners.
 - D. Some may ask why deal with this question in public? We need to be aware of Christ’s real meaning because the myth of palatial houses reserved for us in heaven simply perpetuates our materialism. We spend so much time dreaming of wealth on earth, that we imagine heaven as nothing more than living in the house on the hill. Heaven will be so much greater than that.

- II. What was wrong with Cain’s sacrifice?
 - A. In **Genesis 4:3-5**, God respected Abel’s animal sacrifice, but did not respect Cain’s vegetable sacrifice. Many simply read these verses and assume that Cain’s sacrifice was flawed because it was of vegetables and not animals. However, note very carefully that the text does not say that. That is our assumption. Often that assumption is based on the fact that under the Old Covenant the great majority of sacrifices were animal sacrifices. However, that was not strictly the case. Allow me to assure you that God did accept non-animal sacrifices. In **Exodus 22:29**, the Israelites were commanded to offer the first of their ripe produce—fruits and vegetables. Note also **Leviticus 2**. The problem may well have been that God only wanted an animal sacrifice from these two men. However, I do not know how we would establish that.
 - B. What was really wrong with Cain’s sacrifice? I do not know. Nor does anyone else. The only insight we are given to this matter is found in **Hebrews 11:4**. Abel offered a better sacrifice by faith. Evidently, Cain, while offering his sacrifice, lacked faith or disregarded faith. According to **Romans 10:17**, “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.” Evidently, Cain disregarded something God had said. Perhaps Cain did disregard that it was supposed to be an animal sacrifice. Perhaps Cain disregarded that he was supposed to give the best or the first. We simply do not know. God did not tell us this story to tell us why He accepted one sacrifice and not the other. Rather, this story is told to demonstrate how sin continued in the world and progressed from Adam to his children.

- III. If women are to be silent in worship, why do we allow them to sing?
 - A. This question stems from **I Corinthians 14:34-35**. In the context of this chapter, the command for women to keep silent in the church is not a command to keep from uttering any sounds whatsoever in anything that is “church” related. Rather, this is specifically talking about the assembly of the church (**vs. 23, 26**). Secondly, it is dealing with addressing the congregation in a position of authority. That is demonstrated by the fact that others were told in this chapter to keep silent in the church. In **vs. 28**, Paul told the tongue speaker to keep silent when there was no interpreter. That is, he was not to address the congregation with his tongue-speaking revelation. That did not mean he could never utter a sound, he could never sing and never say the “amen” (**vs. 16**). In **vs. 30**, prophets were told to keep silent if someone else received a

revelation. Paul was not saying once another man received revelation the first prophet was no longer allowed to utter a sound, but rather he was to cease addressing the congregation.

- B. This passage is a specific application of Paul's general teaching in **I Timothy 2:11-14**. Paul demonstrates that God established a universal order of relationship when he created man first and then woman. Secondly, the initial sin of Eve, before Adam's sin furthered that irreversible relationship between the genders. Based on these two unchangeable facts, God has said that women are not allowed to have authority over men in His church, but to learn submissively.
- C. Further, in **I Corinthians 14:35**, evidently, some were striving to address the assembly by claiming that their addresses were simply for the sake of learning. Evidently, however, their approach to learning was not submissive. Paul's rebuke demonstrates the care we need to take when dealing with these issues. In our modern day, as we men are learning to relate to women more equitably and are learning the numerous ways in which we have misused and abused God's word in our relationships with women, some are trying to throw the baby out with the bath water. Instead of walking God's narrow path, some are striving to see if under some cloak of legitimacy they can allow what God has condemned. Any situation in which women are exercising authority over men within Christ's church is wrong, no matter how we try to cloak it or make it appear legitimate. I have heard of churches setting up classes with adult men or even high school and college age in which a woman would teach. Their defense was, "We have elders who are monitoring the class, she is teaching under their authority." Perhaps in some way she was still under the authority of the elders. But she was exercising authority over every other male in the class. This passage offers us a warning against trying to legitimize these practices through some twisting, turning means of justification.
- D. Having said all of that, however, we must keep the prohibition in context. The prohibition is an issue of addressing the congregation as one in authority. It is not a prohibition against ever uttering a sound. It is not a prohibition against ever saying, "Amen" in worship. It is not a prohibition against asking questions or even making a statement in discussion oriented class settings. It is not a prohibition against speaking within this building. It is not a prohibition against getting on to unruly children. It is not a prohibition against confessing our faith in God before a baptism. Finally, it is not a prohibition against singing in the assembly. The command to sing is universal (**Ephesians 5:19**). When the congregation sings together (**I Corinthians 14:15**), no one is exercising authority over anyone. The prohibition is simply this, women are not to exercise authority over men in the church—singing does not violate this prohibition.

IV. Some say that the God of Islam and the God of Christianity are the same God, is that true?

- A. Perhaps in some stretched sense that is true. Muslims claim to worship the God of Abraham. So do we. Both Christians and Muslims strive to trace their roots back to Abraham and his one God that was different from the pagan gods multiplied throughout the world.
- B. However, that is where the possible connection ends. The Muslim god gave promises to Abraham that were supposedly fulfilled through Ishmael. However, the God of the Bible gave a promise that was fulfilled through Isaac (**Romans 9:6-9**). Further, the god of Islam is singular in person. There is only Allah. There is no Father, Son and Holy Spirit as in the God of the Bible, our God (**Matthew 28:19**). The god of Islam, sent numerous prophets into the world, one of which was a man named Jesus. Our God, the God of the Bible sent numerous prophets into the world. But Jesus was not just a prophet, He was God incarnate (**John 1:1-5, 14**). Finally, the god of Islam sent his greatest prophet Mohammed. The God of the Bible did not.
- C. For these reasons, despite the attempt to make a historical connection with the God of Abraham, I believe the Muslims worship a different god. However, let me say, if in some way it could be firmly established that Muslims are worshipping our God, they are doing so incorrectly. They are doing so according to the commands of men and their worship is in vain (**Matthew 15:8-9**). We do not want to have any part of that.

Conclusion:

We have had some interesting questions this month. I hope this has been helpful to you. Please, remember that you can submit your questions by putting them in the appropriate box outside of my office door.