“REMOVE NOT THE ANCIENT LANDMARKS”

A. The psalmist wrote, “I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times” (77:5).

1. Much good can result from considering ancient times, especially God’s ancient people – that’s what the Psalmist did.

[Today we want to consider an ancient truth that God expressed to Israel, but which also has an application to the church.]

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF PROPERTY RIGHTS

A. The ancient land of Canaan was divided among the descendants of Jacob's 12 sons, & the LORd had very rigid guidelines governing property inheritance.

1. Genealogies were painstakingly kept in order to ascertain true ownership of property through the generations.

2. Stone markers were set at boundaries of family plots, referred to as “landmarks.”

3. These landmarks were extremely important so as to know where to graze sheep, cattle, build pens, houses, walls, vineyards, etc.

4. We can well imagine what would happen if these landmarks were moved arbitrarily or removed completely.

5. You might wake up one day to find that your land no longer had its original potential to grow crops or to breed livestock.

6. Consider this illustration:

Let's say you had 800-acre tract of land, 200 yrs. ago, which you divided among your 4 children (each child had 200 acres). Then your 4 children divided their land among 16 grandchildren (each child had 50 acres). Then your 16 grandchildren divided their land among 64 great grandchildren (each child had 12.5 acres). Then your 64 great grandchildren divided their land among 256 great-great grandchildren (each child had 3.125 acres). Then your 256 great-great grand-children divided their land among 1024 great-great-great grand-children (each child had 0.78 acres).
In ancient Israel, a man’s land went to his oldest son, or if he had no sons, then to his daughter (Num 27); this kept their tracts of land larger, which enabled them to use the land more effectively.

To move the landmarks on these properties was a very serious offense with God.

II. THE OLD TESTAMENT ON LANDMARKS

Deut 19:14 – You shall not remove your neighbor’s landmark, which the men of old have set, in your inheritance which you will inherit in the land that the Lord your God is giving you to possess. 27:17 – Cursed is the one who moves his neighbor’s landmark. And all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’

Job 24:1-4 – Since times are not hidden from the Almighty, why do those who know Him see not His days? 2 Some remove landmarks; they seize flocks violently & feed on them; 3 they drive away the donkey of the fatherless; they take the widow’s ox as a pledge. 4 They push the needy off the road; all the poor of the land are forced to hide.

Prov 22:28 – Do not remove the ancient landmark which your fathers have set. 23:10 – Do not remove the ancient landmark, nor enter the fields of the fatherless;

[The ancient landmarks of the 12 tribes were set in place by “the men of old”, their “fathers” who lived in the days of Joshua.]

They were put in place to avoid confusion, to give legal rights to the families of that tribe, & to ward off thievery.

Job said that to remove them was an act of violence similar to robbing an orphan or a widow, which was a deed that brought down the “ire” or anger of God.

Do we have ancient landmarks to observe?

III. HOW THE PRINCIPLE APPLIES TO US

A. The traditions of the apostles?

2 Thess 2:13-15 – But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit & belief in the truth, 14 to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast & hold the traditions [something handed down] which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.

1. The only “traditions” that Christians were ever commanded to “stand fast [firm] & hold [on to]”, were those things “taught” by the apostles of Jesus Christ.
2. The RCC teaches that the NT contains the *epistles* written by the apostles, but if you want to know their *word* then you must come to them; they hold the verbal traditions of the apostles.

3. Remember the Bereans? They didn’t believe they had to check with any other source but the Scripture to prove the truth of Paul’s preaching (*Acts 17:11*).

   a. Was their understanding of Paul’s gospel incomplete because they didn’t check with the Pharisees first? No!

   b. The Bereans illustrated just how WE are to observe the ancient landmarks.

   c. They sought *divine* rather than human tradition – and the *divine* tradition (the word of God) was put down in written form by “the men of old” (Scripture: Moses & the prophets).

4. The divine tradition has also been put down in written form for us too.

   **Eph 3:3-4** – how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as *I have briefly written* already, 4 by which, *when you read, you may understand my knowledge* in the mystery of Christ).

   **1 Cor 4:6** – Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself & Apollos for your sakes, *that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written*, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.

   a. When men “think beyond what is [was] written” in the NT, they open themselves up for the same condemnation Jesus pronounced on the Pharisees.

   **Mark 7:6-9** – “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ’This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. 7 And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ 8 For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men — the washing of pitchers & cups, & many other such things you do.” 9 He said to them, “*All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.*”

   [So the traditions of the apostles are an ancient landmark, & that is so because they are...]
B. The doctrine of Christ.

2 John 8-11 – Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. 9 **Whoever transgresses** [proago: to progress, go ahead] & **does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God.** He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father & the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you & does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; 11 for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.

1. Whether John is referring to the doctrine *about* Christ’s nature or the actual teaching *of* Christ is of little consequences – the principle John stated applies to both.

2. To take action without respect to the doctrine of Christ makes one a spiritual outlaw.

   a. How is that the case? He has removed the ancient landmark! The “doctrine of Christ.”

3. For ages, men have justified overlooking the doctrine of Christ [the traditions of the apostles] for the sake of “progress”.

   a. They want to be seen as “progressive” – it makes them sound intelligent, open-minded & productive.

   [But to close one’s ears to the NT is to be *digressive* rather than a *progressive.*]

IV. EXAMPLES OF REMOVING THE ANCIENT LANDMARKS

A. Many brethren today are not concerned with the ancient landmarks.

   1. Scriptural NT authority is not necessary to them as long as they are “doing something”

   2. But that is the very attitude that will bring about the removing of ancient landmarks & the creating of new unauthorized boundaries.

   3. We’re not excusing doing nothing, but “doing something” is not always doing right.
B. **Examples** of removing the ancient landmarks.


3. Landmark: Male leadership in the assembly *(1 Cor 14:34; 1 Tim 2:11-12)* – removed by women pastors & teachers.

4. Landmark: Communion on the first day of every week *(Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 11)* – removed by a daily, monthly or yearly observance.

5. Landmark: The work of the church to preach the truth *(Eph 4:11-16)* – removed by implementing community programs, recreational & social functions.

6. Landmark: Sexual contact outside of marriage is fornication *(1 Cor 7:2)* – removed by allowing couples to live & sleep together before marriage.

7. Landmark: God’s marriage laws: one man for one woman for life one exception *(Matt 5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:1-10)* – removed by allowing divorce for every cause.

[This list can go on & on, but the result of moving any divine landmarks will be confusion, sin & ultimately separation from God.]

CLOSING

A. **Today we are seeing** the fruit of removing the ancient landmarks.

1. Churches are full of impurity & iniquity.

2. Many elders are refusing to confront these matters, & many preachers are more concerned with their “position” that with preaching “the whole counsel of God.”

3. But it is better to endure the ridicule of men than to suffer rebuke from God for removing His landmarks *(Heb 10:32-39)*.

Isa 8:20 – *To the law & to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*