

## **Unwitnessed Wedding Vows – Are They Scriptural?**

By, George Battey

A report comes from two separate sources that "Peyton Place" Church of Christ has an unmarried couple living together with the approval of the congregation's leaders and at least two outside preachers. A few faithful brothers and sisters at the "Peyton Place" congregation believe this living arrangement to be sinful.

Ken and Barbie (the couple in question) claim to be "married in the eyes of God" because they said marriage vows to each other in private, though no witnesses were present. They were baptized in this unmarried, live-in condition and continue to live together. The reason they do not simply go to a Justice of the Peace and get legally married is because of money. Ken *"receives some sort of funding from the state as long as he is single,"* according to one source.

Here is an initial listing of problems arising from this situation:

- If this situation is acceptable, then repentance is not necessary before baptism, yet the apostles clearly taught repentance (a change of life) was essential before baptism could take place. (Acts 2:38)
- If this situation is acceptable, any young man in the congregation watching this is being taught he may shack-up with his girlfriend and, if questioned, simply inform the brethren he said marriage vows in secret with his girlfriend – no witnesses being present. "A little leaven leavens the whole lump" (1 Cor 5:6).
- If this situation is acceptable, all the members are being taught to lie to the state who supplies pensions to unmarried citizens. The Lord taught His people, "Let your yes be yes and your no, no" (Mt 5:37). The Lord also taught that lying is of the Devil (Jn 8:44).
- If this situation is acceptable, then Christians are not obligated to obey the laws of civil government, yet the Bible clearly teaches Christians must obey civil laws (Rom 13:1-7) unless those laws contradict the laws of God (Acts 5:29). If getting married legally violates the laws of God, then no Christian should become legally married, but to even suggest such is obviously wrong.
- If this situation is acceptable, then covetousness (greed) is not sinful. Yet covetousness was the tenth prohibition of the ten commandments and is clearly sinful even under the New Testament dispensation (Mk 7:20-23). Covetous and fornicating Christians should be expelled from the fellowship of the church (1 Cor 5:11).

The man and woman in this case are guilty of fornication. They should never have been baptized in the first place if the church knew them to be living together without being legally,

legitimately married. A couple saying private vows to one another is not in a bona fide marriage and should not be accepted into the fellowship of the church (1 Cor 5:11).

## **Bible Authority**

The scriptures teach Christians must have Bible authority for all that they do – both in church worship services and in their private lives as well.

### **Colossians 3:17** (NKJV)

<sup>17</sup> And **whatever** you do in word or deed, do **all** in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

### **1 Corinthians 10:31** (NKJV)

<sup>31</sup> Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or **whatever** you do, do **all** to the glory of God.

Both of these passages are broad enough to include both church worship services and the activities of our private lives as well. Everything Christians do must be authorized by the Lord or by one of His official representatives (the apostles). The apostles were called "ambassadors" (2 Cor 5:20). Ambassadors officially represent the King. If the Lord or the apostles authorize something, we are safe and justified in practicing that action. If neither the Lord nor the apostles authorized an action, we are sinning if we participate.

## **How Does The Bible Authorize?**

How does the Bible authorize an action? The Bible authorizes in one of two ways:

(a) **explicitly**

(b) **implicitly**

**Explicit** – *"fully and clearly expressed; leaving nothing implied"* (American Heritage)

### **1 Timothy 4:1** (NKJV)

<sup>1</sup> Now the Spirit **expressly says** that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.

Explicit means you can find a NT passage that says word for word what you're doing.

**Implicit** – *"implied or understood though not directly expressed"* (American Heritage)

**Mark 12:26-27 (NKJV)**

<sup>26</sup> But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'?

<sup>27</sup> He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken."

In this burning bush passage God taught two things indirectly:

- He taught indirectly that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are still alive – though their bodies are dead.
- He taught indirectly there will be a resurrection from the dead.

God did not explicitly say any of these things in that passage. He implied them. **When God implies something, He is not being silent. Implication is not silence.**

- When the Bible explicitly requires an assembly of the church (Heb 10:25), it at the very same time implies a place to assemble – for an assembly requires a place to assemble. A house is a place. Under a tree is a place. A church building is a place. Therefore, church buildings are authorized by the implicit teachings of God.
- When the Bible explicitly requires a cup for the communion service (1 Cor 11:25), it at the very same time implies a silver cup may be used. A glass cup may also be used. Both are authorized. While God did not explicitly say the church must use a silver cup, He did authorize a cup. If a silver cup is a cup (and it is), then a silver cup is authorized by implication. If a glass cup is a cup (and it is), then a glass cup is authorized by implication.

## **Six Possibilities**

Every action Christians can perform falls into one of six categories:

### **1) Something can be explicitly REQUIRED**

**Acts 2:38**

<sup>38</sup> Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Here is an **explicit** requirement.

**2) Something can be explicitly PERMITTED**

**Romans 14:5**

<sup>5</sup> One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.

Here is an **explicit** permission. A man does not have to esteem one day above another, but is permitted to do so.

**3) Something can be explicitly PROHIBITED**

**1 Corinthians 14:34-35**

<sup>34</sup> Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. <sup>35</sup> And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.

Here is an **explicit** prohibition.

**4) Something can be implicitly REQUIRED**

**Exodus 20:8**

<sup>8</sup> "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

This passage implicitly required keeping **every** Sabbath day holy. (cf. Num 15:32-36). In the same way, Acts 20:7 implies communion is to be observed **every** first day of the week.

**5) Something can be implicitly PERMITTED**

**Ephesians 4:28**

<sup>28</sup> Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather **let him labor, working with his hands what is good**, that he may have something to give him who has need.

This passage **implicitly permits** a man to be a mechanic, a carpenter, a computer programmer or any other occupation which is considered "good." No one is required to be a mechanic, but they are permitted (authorized).

## 6) **Something can be implicitly PROHIBITED**

### **Matthew 5:44**

<sup>44</sup> But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

While this passage explicitly requires certain things (love for enemies), it also implicitly prohibits things. It **implicitly prohibits** anything that is hateful toward an enemy (killing).

So, while there is no passage which explicitly say, "*Do not join the military and kill the enemies of your country,*" this passage *implicitly prohibits* such.

## **Silence**

What have we learned this far?

- We have learned that everything we do must be authorized by either Jesus or one of His apostles.
- We have learned that authorization comes in one of two forms: (a) explicit authorization or (b) implicit authorization.
- We have learned that when God implies something, He is not being silent because implication is not silence.

This brings us now to the subject of silence. What is silence?

Silence is the absence of all explicit and all implicit teachings. When there is no explicit and no implicit teaching, there is nothing – just silence. When God is silent about something He is being silent on purpose. This is called **legislative silence**.

**Legislative silence** – when the law is purposefully silent about an action and that silence is viewed as expressing the intent of the lawmaker.

In both the OT and NT we find consistent proof that when God is silent about something, we are forbidden:

- **To practice** the thing under consideration or
- **To teach** the doctrine under consideration.

### **Hebrews 1:5**

<sup>5</sup> For to which of the angels did He ever say:  
"You are My Son,  
Today I have begotten You"?  
And again:  
"I will be to Him a Father,  
And He shall be to Me a Son"?

This passage is making an argument based on silence. The scriptures are silent about an angel being the Son of God. Therefore, **silence forbids** any teaching which says Jesus was or is an angel.

### **Acts 15:22-24**

<sup>22</sup> Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren.

<sup>23</sup> They wrote this, letter by them:

The apostles, the elders, and the brethren,

To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia:

Greetings.

<sup>24</sup> Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law" — to whom **we gave no such commandment** —

The letter written by the apostles is based on silence. No apostle ever taught circumcision and keeping the Mosaic law was necessary for salvation. Therefore, men are **forbidden to teach and practice** such a doctrine.

Jesus said:

### **Matthew 15:9**

<sup>9</sup> And in vain they worship Me,  
Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

In the same context He said:

**Matthew 15:13-14**

<sup>13</sup> But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.

<sup>14</sup> Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."

When Jesus said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted," He meant every doctrine and every invention of man which heaven did not authorize shall be "*rooted up*." No one has any right to add a single innovation to the church of Christ which He Himself did not install.

**1 Peter 4:11**

<sup>11</sup> If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. ...

**Acts 2:42**

<sup>42</sup> And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Over and over we are instructed in the scriptures that silence forbids. Over and over we are given object lessons which reinforce the fact that silence forbids. When God is silent about something, He's silent on purpose. His silence is expressing His intent. We are not allowed to add any action or doctrine over which He is silent about because His silence is purposeful-silence.

- Cain was punished because he offered a sacrifice of vegetables which God was silent about (see Gen 4:1-7 and Heb 11:4).
- Moses was punished because he struck the rock when God was silent about striking the rock (Num 20).
- Nadab and Abihu were punished because they offered "strange fire" which God was silent about (Lev 10:1-2).
- Uzzah was struck because God was silent about non-Levites touching the ark of the covenant (1 Chron 13, 15).

The church of Christ has long recognized and taught that Bible silence forbids. Faithful brethren have debated thru the years that all innovations are wrong because God's silence forbids any additions.

- We have held that mechanical instruments of music are sinful in Christian worship simply because the New Testament scriptures are silent about mechanical instruments. (The Lord and His apostles are not silent about vocal singing, but they are silent about mechanical instruments.)
- We have held that individual communion cups are sinful in Christian worship because the New Testament scriptures are silent about a plurality of drinking vessels. (The Lord and His apostles are not silent about one container, but they are silent about a plurality of cups.)
- We have held that Bible classes are sinful in Christian worship because the New Testament scriptures are silent about dividing the assembly into groups for simultaneous teaching. Silence forbids. (The Lord and His apostles are not silent about one assembly with one man speaking at a time to the audience, but they are silent about simultaneous group teaching.)

## **"Private Marriage Vows"** **(Part 1)**

Now we are ready to address the question concerning "private-marriage-vows." When a boyfriend and girlfriend shack-up together and then tell the church they are married because they said private wedding vows, are they indeed married? Should the church accept this as a valid, bona fide marriage.

This is embarrassing to even ask. Why is it embarrassing? It's embarrassing because unbelievers know the answer to this question, but some of God's people do not know the answer. For example:

- California does not recognize "common law marriages."
- Oregon does not recognize "common law marriages."
- Washington does not recognize "common law marriages."

There are a few states which do accept "common law marriages," but even in these states there are requirements.

First, there is a myth that if a couple lives together for seven years, in a state recognizing "common law marriage," then they are married. This is not true. The length of time living together has nothing to do with whether the state considers such a couple as married.

<http://www.unmarried.org/common-law-marriage-fact-sheet/>; accessed 3/18/16).

Second, according to the website, "*Unmarried Equality*":



If you live in one of the above states and you “hold yourself out to be married” (by telling the community you are married, calling each other husband and wife, using the same last name, filing joint income tax returns, etc.), you can have a common law marriage ... Legally, common law married couples must play by all the same rules as “regular” married couples.

<http://www.unmarried.org/common-law-marriage-fact-sheet/>; accessed 3/18/16).

Let's apply this information to the situation which has evoked this very study.

A report comes from two separate sources that "Peyton Place" Church of Christ has an unmarried couple living together with the approval of the congregation's leaders and at least two outside preachers.

Ken and Barbie (the couple in question) claim to be "married in the eyes of God" because they said marriage vows to each other in private, though no witnesses were present. They were baptized in this unmarried, live-in condition and continue to live together. The reason they do not simply go to a Justice of the Peace and get legally married is because of money. Ken "*receives some sort of funding from the state as long as he is single,*" according to one source.

According to the rules of common-law-marriage, which we just reviewed, Ken and Barbie are not married – even if their state were a common-law-marriage-state (which it is not). Why? Because Ken and Barbie are not "holding themselves out to be married" by "telling the community they are married, calling each other husband and wife, using the same last name, and filing joint income tax returns." You see, Ken doesn't want the state to know he's "married" (I say this in an accommodating way – because he is, in fact, not married). Ken doesn't want the state to know he's "married" because he will lose some sort of funding from the state if he ever marries. In plain, simple language:

- Ken and Barbie are liars.
- They are fornicators.
- And they are covetous.

All three of these sins are deserving of church disciplinary actions. They should be "turned over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh," in hopes that "their spirits might be saved in the day of the Lord's coming" (1 Cor 5:5, 11). Shame on the church leaders and the two preachers who support such sinful behavior.

If Ken and Barbie are married:

- Let them produce their tax returns for all the years they were married. Let the church see how they filed their taxes. Did they file as "married" or "single"?

- Let Barbie produce her driver's license and prove her last name is the same as her "husband's" last name. Is this couple "holding themselves out to be married" in the eyes of the community in every way?

The very fact that Ken is motivated to keep this "marriage" a secret from the state indicates there is no marriage whatsoever.

## **"Private Marriage Vows"** **(Part 2)**

Let us now apply scripture to this present situation.

What have we learned in this study?

- We have learned that everything we do must be authorized by either Jesus or one of His apostles. (Col 3:17)
- We have learned that authorization comes in one of two forms: (a) explicit authorization or (b) implicit authorization.
- We have learned that when God implies something, He is not being silent because implication is not silence.
- We have learned that silence forbids.

Let's apply all we have learned about Bible authority to the "private-marriage-vows" of Ken and Barbie.

### **1) Where does scripture authorize a private marriage union with no witnesses present?**

The Bible is filled with public marriage unions. For example:

- Jesus and His disciples attended a wedding in Cana of Galilee where all the community was aware of a marriage taking place (Jn 2).
- When Jacob married both Leah (Gen 29:22) and Rachael (Gen 29:28) the entire community was aware of a marriage taking place.
- When Samson was going to marry a Philistine, the entire community was aware of what was about to transpire (Judges 14).
- When Boaz acquired Ruth for his wife, a public proclamation was made at the gate of the city before the marriage was consummated (Ruth 4).

- When Jesus told parables involving weddings, they were public events which all the community was aware of. The marriage of the King's son (Mt 22) and the wise and foolish virgins (Mt 25) were parables involving marriage unions. All of them were public.

If someone asked me for scripture to have a public marriage union, I could give scripture to support that.

However, what passage authorizes a private marriage with no witnesses being present?

- There is no passage explicitly teaching this. If there was such a passage, we would not even be having this discussion.
- There is not passage implying a private marriage union with no witnesses being present.
- All we have is silence and silence forbids.

## 2) **"Giving and given in marriage" negates the "private-vow" position.**

Observe carefully the wording in the following passages:

### **Luke 17:27 (NKJV)**

<sup>27</sup> They ate, they drank, **they married wives, they were given in marriage**, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

### **Matthew 22:30 (NKJV)**

<sup>30</sup> For in the resurrection they neither **marry** nor are **given in marriage**, but are like angels of God in heaven.

### **1 Corinthians 7:38 (NKJV)**

<sup>38</sup> So then **he who gives her in marriage** does well, but he who does not give her in marriage does better.

These passages speak of (a) "marrying" and (b) being "given in marriage." "Marrying" refers to the action of the groom. "Being given in marriage" refers to the action performed upon the bride. In order for a bride to be "given in marriage," someone else must be present besides the bride and groom. Marriage in the Bible requires that someone must be present to "give" the bride to the groom and vouchsafe the fact that a true marriage has occurred.

Matthew 22:30 is important because it teaches that brides must be "given in marriage" until the end of time. This is not simply something which occurs under the OT economy.

Who "gives" away the bride? Her father does this (cf. Dt 22:16). In the absence of the father, a brother in the family "gives" the bride in marriage (cf. Gen 24:50-51). Ruth, who had no father or brother to give her in marriage, was presented in marriage by Naomi (Ruth 3:1; 4:9).

### 3) **Divorce requires a certificate, therefore, marriage must require a certificate.**

#### **Deuteronomy 24:1** (NKJV)

<sup>1</sup>“ When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and **he writes her a certificate of divorce**, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house,

#### **Matthew 19:7** (NKJV)

<sup>7</sup> They said to Him, “Why then did **Moses command to give a certificate of divorce**, and to put her away?”

Moses required a "certificate of divorce." This was given for the woman's own protection. In the event of a remarriage on the part of the woman, a spiteful ex-husband could claim she was still married to him and she was now committing adultery and should be stoned to death. The certificate of divorce protected the woman from such vengeful action on the part of the ex-husband.

Question: Are Bible students to assume a certificate was required for divorce, but no certificate was required for the marriage itself? If the divorced woman needed written proof that she was actually divorced (in order to avoid death), wouldn't a woman need written proof that she was married in order to prevent false accusations?

Written documents are required for the purchase of land (cf. Jer 32:8-14). Written documents were required for divorce (cf. Dt 24:1). However, according to the "Peyton Place" church leaders, nothing in writing is required for marriage. According to the Bible, there must be a written document for when the marriage ends in divorce, but according to the "Peyton Place" church leaders, no written document is required to prove when the marriage begins. Who can believe it? This is wrong.

### 4) **Vows involving other people are spoken in the presence of witnesses.**

If a person speaks a vow involving only himself, no witnesses are required. Jacob "vowed a vow" to God and was all alone when he did so (Gen 28:20). However, when a vow, a pledge, or an oath involves other people, or property, there must be witnesses to the vow, pledge, or promise.

**Ruth 4:9-11 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> And Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "**You are witnesses** this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, from the hand of Naomi.

<sup>10</sup> Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, I have acquired as my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren and from his position at the gate. **You are witnesses** this day."

<sup>11</sup> And all the people who were at the gate, and the elders, said, "**We are witnesses**. The LORD make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel; and may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem.

Ken and Barbie's "private-vow" position states the opposite. Their position states: "No witnesses are necessary for this monumental union, which involves the church and the community, and which, if dissolved, will require a written certificate." Who can believe it? This is wrong.

**5) How has the couple been presenting themselves to the public?**

Are Ken and Barbie presenting themselves to the public as husband and wife? When they file tax returns, are they filing as "married"? Are they willing to show to the church their tax filings for all the years they have been "secretly married" and produce proof that they represented themselves as "married" to the public?

When the couple fills out loan forms at the bank or credit card applications, do they represent themselves on all written documents as "married"? If so, let them produce such applications for the examination of the church. If they do not represent themselves as married to the government and financial institutions, then they are lying.

**6) The Lord always speaks of marriage performed in public - not secrecy.**

Consider the public nature of passages which speak of marriage and weddings.

- Mt 22:2, "*The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son.*" This is public.
- Mt 25:10, "*And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.*" This is public.
- Lk 5:34, "*And He said to them, 'Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them?'*" This is public.
- Jn 2:1, "*On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.*" This is public.
- Jn 3:29, "*He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice.*" Here is a third party, a "friend of the bridegroom" who is an outside witness to the marriage.
- Rev 19:7, "*Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.*" This is public.

There is no such "critter" as a "private marriage union with no witnesses."

## **7) We must follow the laws of the government.**

The government requires a legal marriage in order for couples to be considered "married" with the privileges of filing taxes together, survival and inheritance rights, etc. We must follow the laws of our government unless they conflict with God's laws.

### **Romans 13:1-5 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

<sup>2</sup> Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

<sup>3</sup> For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.

<sup>4</sup> For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

<sup>5</sup> Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake.

What right does any couple have to ignore the laws of the country and have a "secret marriage" contrary to the laws of the state?

## **8) Burden of proof.**

The burden of proof falls on the person attempting to prove something is true. The person denying something does not have to prove anything. All the "denier" has to do is deny. Hence, in order for a man and woman to say they are married, they must prove they are married. What proof can the couple offer to prove they are married?

- Does Barbie's driver's license have her maiden name or married name?
- Does Barbie's Social Security card have her maiden name or married name?
- Are the tax returns of Ken and Barbie filed as "married filing jointly" or "married filing separately" or are the tax returns filed as "single"?
- Are there documents for property, water bills, rental agreements, etc. which have both Ken and Barbie's name and do both Ken and Barbie have the same last name?

In order to receive permanent-resident-status in Australia, my daughter had to prove she was actually married to my Australian son-in-law. My daughter was not entitled to say, "It's none of your business." Rather, the burden of proof was on her to prove with documents that she was indeed married to my son-in-law.

When it comes to the church, people think they church has no rights. "It's none of your business whether we're married or not," some say. Yet they speak differently to civil rulers and courts. They realize they have the burden of proof on their shoulders when dealing with civil government, but when dealing with brethren and the church, they expect the church to simply take-them-at-their-word.

### **Is This The Church's Business?**

One last question should be answered before we finish: Is this the church's business?

Ken and Barbie are upset and telling the church, "It's none of your business whether we're married or not." Is this true? Is it the church's business to know whether or not it's members are committing fornication or not? It most certainly is the church's business.

- The church has been ordered by the Lord to exercise discipline upon members who are fornicating (1 Cor 5:11). If "private vows" are not legitimate, the couple in question would be committing fornication and should, therefore, be disciplined by the church.
- Before sinners can be baptized by church members, those sinners must first repent (Acts 2:38). If "private vows" are not legitimate, the couple in question would be

committing fornication and should not be baptized until each repents of the sexual sin he/she is involved in.

This is certainly the business of the church.

If Ken and Barbie don't want the church to know about their fornication, they need to quit the church and dissociate themselves from the church. If they continue to associate with the church and will not cease their fornication, then the church must perform the action of dissociation upon them against their will. This is call "church discipline" and is outlined in 1 Cor 5.

Again, consider this passage:

**2 Corinthians 8:20-21 (NKJV)**

<sup>20</sup> avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us—

<sup>21</sup> **providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.**

Paul wrote 2 Cor 8 in reference to church-money he was carrying to Judea for the poor saints. He did not want anyone to think he was "dipping his hand into the money" and enriching himself. To prevent accusations, he took witnesses who would testify of his honesty.

Ken and Barbie should be so concerned about their own reputations and the reputation of the church that they should "provide honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." Jesus said:

**Matthew 5:14-16 (NKJV)**

<sup>14</sup> "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

<sup>15</sup> Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

<sup>16</sup> Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

"Private vows" which the public was excluded from hearing, contradicts the above mandate for open and transparent display of righteousness. The world could not possibly see any difference between the oft-practiced "shacking-up" and the so-called "private vows" marriage.

## **Conclusion**

The conclusion of this presentation is that Ken and Barbie are not married. If the church leaders knew this before they were baptized, the church should have refused baptism until such time



that Ken and Barbie were ready to repent (change their lives). This is the Biblical mandate (Acts 2:38).

Sometimes the church leaders find out after the fact that a couple whom they assumed to be married are not really married. If such is the case, the leaders need to explain to Ken and Barbie that they must become legally married – following the civil laws of "Caesar" (Rom 13:1-7) and being a light to the world (Mt 5:14-16). If Ken and Barbie will not repent, if they will not get married, if they will not cease living together, and if they refuse to confess they are sinning, they must be expelled from the fellowship of the church (1 Cor 5:11).

**1 John 1:8-9 (NKJV)**

<sup>8</sup> If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

<sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.