

Today's Sermons
 Morning: Our God is the God of...
 Evening: Song Service

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FOR THE RECORD

Sunday Bible Study	18
Sunday AM Worship	27
Sunday PM Worship	18
Wed. Bible Study	20
Offering	\$2151



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"WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED TOGETHER IN MY NAME"
 Roger D. Campbell

Times of Services:
Sunday
 Bible Study:.... 10:00am
 AM Worship:..11:00am
 PM Worship:....6:00pm
 2nd Sunday:.....1:30pm

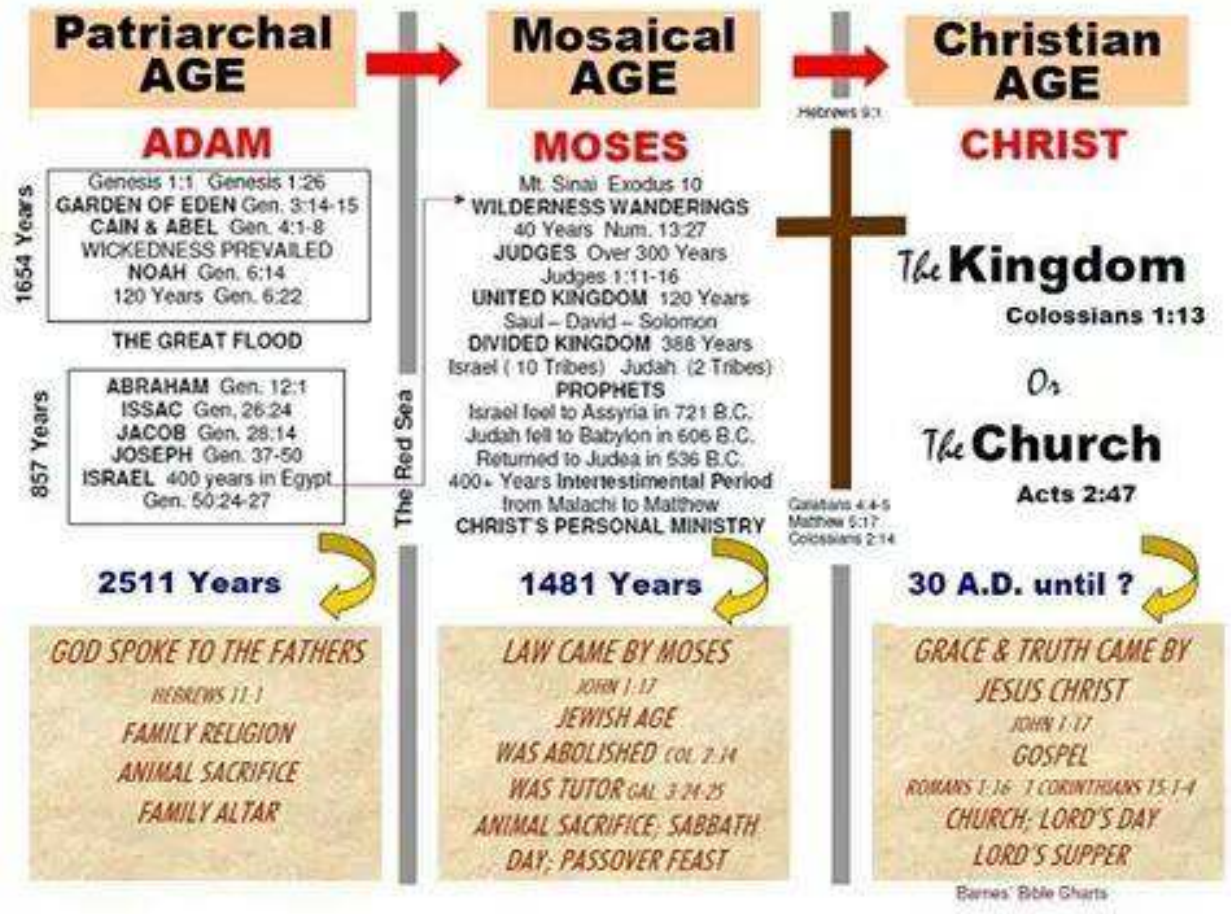
Wednesday
 Bible Study:.....7:00pm

Radio Program
 Sunday:.....7:30am
 "Back to the Bible"
 AM 580 WSKS
 93.5 FM

These oft-quoted words of Jesus are recorded in Matthew 18:20. What was the context? Jesus was with His disciples, who had asked Him, "*Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven*" (18:1-5). In that same setting, Jesus taught them not to be a cause of stumbling to others (18:6-10) and that the Son of man had come "*to save that which was lost*" (18:11-14).

It was right after this that the Master taught them how to deal with one another in matters of one sinning against a fellow disciple. Well, what were they to do? "*Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother*" (18:15). What if that effort did not solve the problem? "*But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of **two or three** witnesses every word may be established*" (18:16). And what if that, too, did not produce the desired result? "*And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but*

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if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" (18:17) [all emphasis here and in all other verse quotations mine, rdc].

Here is a personal observation: it appears to me that this is one of the most disregarded teachings of Jesus. In far too many cases, rather than go to the brother or sister that has offended them, folks instead choose to tell it to someone else (a friend, relative, elder, preacher, etc.) that is not even remotely involved in the personal conflict between two of God's children. To disregard what the Christ said and do it a different way (our way) is, of course, choosing human wisdom over divine direction, and is sinful.

Back to what Jesus told the disciples. He went on to say, "*Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if **two** of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (18:18,19). Then, finally, come the words that we are considering: "*For where **two or three** are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (18:20).**

Without doubt, a majority of the Christians whom I have heard refer to the message of verse 20 ("*For where two or three are gathered together in my name . . .*") have applied it to the thought of Christians coming together to worship God, and as long as there are two or three of us, then God is in our midst. A number of public prayers have expressed such a sentiment. While there is no doubt that God blesses His faithful children in a worship assembly, the context of Matthew 18:15-20 is not about collective worship.

In the immediate context that concerns the matter of one brother sinning against another and how such should be handled, Jesus said the following: (1) "two or three," (2) "two," and, again, (3) "two or three." In the first instance, it is "two or three" witnesses to the efforts of the two disciples who are at odds with one another to solve their personal conflict (18:15. In the second instance, it is "two" of the apostles agreeing on earth, and in the final case, it is the familiar "*where two or three are*

gathered together in my name." Can this third use of "two or three" be totally separated from the first two cases that are used in the very same context? We think not.

In the context, there are actually two matters that could involve "two or three" being gathered in Jesus' name: (1) It could mean that Jesus would bless the efforts of His two or three followers who act as faithful, helpful witnesses in solving those sticky matters in which one saint offends another; or, (2) The "two or three" being gathered in Jesus' name could also refer to the truth that since His apostles' authority is heaven-given, then He would bless them in their decisions and work. In fact, we could see how these two possibilities could even come together as one in some cases: blessing those two or three witnesses who act according to the apostles' heaven-given authority.

Jehovah told Joshua, ". . . *as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Joshua 1:5).* God can bless one person who is alone just as He can bless a multitude. Do you remember the apostle John being on the isle of Patmos? (Revelation 1:9). Yes, a thousand times, yes, we believe in the principle that the Lord "walks" with us as we "walk" with Him, including our scriptural worship assemblies. But, we say again: in the context of Matthew 18:20, when Jesus spoke about "two or three," He was teaching about the authority of His apostles and the proper handling of personal conflicts, and not about how many people are present in a worship assembly.

*"Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent"
(John 6:28-29).*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Oct 11 – Song Service after Evening Worship
- Oct 25 – Prayer Service after Evening Worship
- Nov 1 – Men's Business Meeting and Ladies' Bible Class
- Please give support money for Chinese orphans to Jim Winters