

Debate On Biblical Putting-Away

Bill H. Reeves and Joel Gwin: Disputants

This debate will specifically deal with the issue that the Civil Procedure brethren erroneously refer to as “mental divorce” or a “the second putting-away.”

July 17th and 18th, 2003

At the Holiday Inn, 2910 Fort Campbell Blvd
(US Highway 41A), Hopkinsville, KY

The proposition for both nights is:

“The Bible teaches that if a man puts away his scriptural wife for a reason other than fornication and then commits fornication, the original wife may not remarry.”

Affirms: Joel Gwin (moderator, Greg Gwin)

Denies: Bill H. Reeves (moderator, Tim Haile)

The debate sessions will begin promptly at 7 PM each evening, with two 30 minute speeches, followed by two 20 minute speeches, followed by two 10 minute speeches.

**This debate and all of its arrangements have been made solely by the
Suwanee church of Christ.**

Consult the Bible Banner website for up to date information – <http://www.biblebanner.com>

Some Background Information Concerning The Events Leading Up To This Debate

by Bill H. Reeves

Bro. Joel Gwin in January of this year, 2003, challenged Bro. Reeves to debate him at the Suwanee church (near Eddyville, KY). The Suwanee church agreed to host the debate. So, the debate, and the arrangements for a suitable place for it, are solely the doings of the Suwanee church. Because of an anticipated audience for the debate, and the limited space of the Suwanee church building, the Holiday Inn in Hopkinsville was chosen by the Suwanee church and this church is paying the costs for its use for the two nights.

Inasmuch as Bro. Reeves lives and preaches in Hopkinsville, he wants it clearly understood that no other church is involved in the arrangements for this debate, but only the Suwanee church. He is acting on his own in accepting the challenge to debate Bro. Gwin “at the Suwanee church.” Likewise, Bro. Tim Haile is acting on his own in serving as moderator for Bro. Reeves.

It was thought that the debate would be conducted much earlier (first in March, then April, then May), but principally to accommodate the wishes of Bro. Gwin, the date of July 17,18 was finally agreed upon by both disputants.

Bro. Gwin insisted that Bro. Reeves affirm one night of the debate, and Bro. Reeves offered his affirmative proposition. This he did three times (in their correspondence), and Bro. Gwin would not accept it as worded. It stated:

“The Scriptures teach that when fornication occurs, the innocent spouse, one bound by the marriage bond, is given the right to put away the fornicating mate to whom he has been bound by God, and to remarry.”

Bro. Gwin would not accept that proposition, insisting that he believed that proposition, and would even affirm it in debate! (Bro. Reeves told him that if that should happen, he, Reeves, would moderate for him, Gwin!) Bro. Reeves pointed out to him that he, Bro. Gwin, did not believe that proposition, because it did not contain any provisos. He came back with this: “I cannot deny your proposition as worded. If you will add the ‘CAPS’ portion added below, I will deny your proposition.

"The Scriptures teach that when fornication occurs, the innocent spouse (EVEN IF HE HAS BEEN PREVIOUSLY DIVORCED BY HIS UNGODLY MATE),

one bound by the marriage bond, is given the right to put away the fornicating mate to whom he has been bound by God, and to remarry."

So, as seen above, Bro. Gwin believes what Jesus' statement in Mt. 19:9 declares, provided that the innocent spouse hasn't been previously divorced by his ungodly mate. He puts in his proviso to what Jesus states; he puts his condition upon it. Jesus is right, provided that ... Bro. Reeves will affirm what Jesus declared, but refuses to affirm his proposition with Bro. Gwin's proviso attached to it. If someone wants to go somewhere, he can do his own rowing!

Since Bro. Gwin would not accept Bro. Reeves' proposition, to deny it, and to assure that the debate would take place, Bro. Gwin agreed to affirm both nights. So, this accounts for the one proposition and for Bro. Gwin's being alone in the affirmation part of the debate.

So, the original proposal by Bro. Gwin to Bro. Reeves, to debate him at the Suwanee congregation (near Eddyville, KY), is the proposal to which Bro. Reeves has agreed. The Suwanee congregation in mid- 2002 disfellowshipped its preacher, Bro. David Dodd, in part over the issue to be debated. The opportunity was extended to Bro. Reeves to publicly debate the issue at the Suwanee church building, and he gladly accepted the opportunity to try to help the brethren there see their error in binding a scruple to the point of disfellowshipping over the matter. (Does anyone fault a gospel preacher who is invited by a congregation in error to go study, in public debate, with them concerning an issue that has resulted in drawing lines of fellowship? Should he not go and expose their error and, while respecting their scruples, call upon them to repent and to desist in drawing lines of fellowship?)

"Well, why is the debate to be conducted in Hopkinsville? Doesn't that mean that Bro. Reeves, and maybe the Hopkinsville church (Skyline), have pushed for a debate on this subject?" It means that the Suwanee church, the only church involved in this debate, anticipating an audience for the debate larger than the capacity of their church building, started looking for a meeting place of larger capacity, and after seeking unsuccessfully for such a place close to their own community, arranged for one at the Holiday Inn, in Hopkinsville (in the motel's large conference room).

These background facts should help eliminate any erroneous conclusions that one might draw from reading solely the announcement of the debate as framed by the Suwanee church.

Bill H. Reeves