

Response to UPC Bible study on Jewelry

*Response to a Bible study written by Rev. M.G. Blankenship.
Found at
<http://www.apostolic.edu/biblestudy/files/bwahrpt3.htm>.
Accessed 12/21/06.*

I am not going to reprint the entire study because it would take too much space. What I will do is show a piece from the Bible study and then respond to it. I do recommend that you read the entire Bible study and form your own conclusions.

Spelling and editing errors in the italicized errors are the mistake of the author of the Bible study that I am responding to. Spelling and editing errors in the rest of the article are my mistake.

Something to think about :

I think that this Bible study is a prime example of how the UPC takes Scripture and twists it to make their point. Almost anything (including genocide) can be justified through the Bible...if you're willing to twist Scripture to do it. Please keep that in mind as you go through this Bible study. What Rev. Blankenship writes looks really good on the surface, but when you delve in a little deeper you find that it's all smoke and mirrors. Of course, I am not bashing him or his ministry in any way (I don't even know the man, and I certainly have nothing against him). I believe he is very sincere in what he writes, but being sincere does not make someone correct.

We must always work *up* from the Bible. This means that we look at what the Bible says and we take our beliefs from it. We must never take our beliefs and then work *down* by trying to find Scriptures to justify what we already believe to be true.

With that in mind, let's begin.

Rev. Blankenship writes:

The scripture often associates "excessive" jewelry with Pride & Idolatry. – look how consistently the association is made. When Jacob went back to Bethel to renew his relationship with God, he disposed of all the idols & earrings owned by his family.

Genesis 35:2 "Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that [were] with him, Put away the strange gods that [are] among you, and be clean, and change your garments: (Verse :4) And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which [were] in their hand, and [all their] earrings which [were] in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which [was] by Shechem."

My Response:

The earrings that Jacob's family was wearing were almost certainly related to idolatry, but this does not mean that anyone who was wearing earrings is practicing idolatry. Also, there is nothing at all in the text that says that Jacob's family was wearing "excessive jewelry." This is what the JFB commentary has to say:

[T]hey gave unto Jacob all the strange gods ... and earrings – Strange gods, the "seraphim" (compare Gen. 31:30), as well, perhaps, as other idols acquired among the Shechemite spoil – earrings of various forms, sizes, and materials, which are universally worn in the East, and, then as now, connected with incantation and idolatry (compare Hos. 2:13). The decided tone which Jacob now assumed was the probable cause of the alacrity with which those favorite objects of superstition were surrendered ((A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments by Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown, Gen. 35:4)).

The JFB interpretation—which appears to be the majority interpretation by OT scholars—makes sense. Jacob was obviously cleaning his house of anything relating to false gods. However, it is my opinion that it is rather ridiculous to assume that anyone who wears earrings today is practicing idolatry just because Jacob's family did it several thousand years ago.

Thousands of years ago people built altars to false gods and sacrificed things such as bread, fruit, and meat to them. Does this mean that it is wrong to cook over a campfire today? Are we practicing idolatry just because someone did something similar 5,500 years ago when they practiced idolatry?

Almost everything that we do today can in some way, shape, or form be associated with a pagan custom. This does not mean that these same things descended from pagan customs.

Rev. Blankenship writes:

Look at God's response to Israel after they made the golden calf out of their jewelry.

Exodus 33:4-6 "And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned: and no man did put on him his ornaments. For the LORD had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye [are] a stiffnecked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee. And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by the mount Horeb. " – (stiffnecked had to do with the long gold neck collars)

Where did God's people get the jewelry anyway?—Exodus 11:2—God told them to borrow it from the Egyptian neighbors prior to the exodus: His intent was to use it for his use, not their personal ornamentation. It was due to its value, not vanity!

My Response:

When reading this passage it is important to remember that the sin was the false calf, not the jewelry. It is also important to do some basic Bible study before drawing a conclusion—especially when trying to draw a doctrinal conclusion from a narrative text. Old Testament Christian commentators as well as Jewish commentators agree that removing jewelry was a sign of mourning or sorrow in the Near East. Clarke points out that the custom was still observed when he wrote his commentary in the 18th century ((Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible, Ex. 33:5)).

I am not an Old Testament scholar so I will not attempt to interpret this passage. Instead, I recommend that you read Adam Clarke's comments on this passage. You can find them [here](#).

Clarke explains the historical context of the passage, but the K&D commentary succinctly sums up what was going on:

That this good beginning of repentance might lead to a true and permanent change of heart, Jehovah repeated His threat in a most emphatic manner: "Thou art a stiff-necked people; if I go a moment in the midst of thee, I destroy thee:" i.e., if I were to go up in the midst of thee for only a single moment, I should be compelled to destroy thee because of thine obduracy. He then issued this command: "Throw thine ornament away from thee, and I shall know (by that) what to do to thee ((Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament, Ex. 33:5)).

Finally, it is worth pointing out that the word "stiffnecked" has absolutely nothing to do with "long gold neck collars." The Hebrew word that the KJV translates "stiffnecked" is actually two words—H7186 and H6203. The best equivalent word in English is probably "obstantant," which is just how the NASB translates it (I.E. "You are an obstinate people"...etc.).

Rev. Blankenship writes:

Another time Israel received gold from the Midianites, they offered it to God. (which is the proper response)

Numbers 31:50-51 "We have therefore brought an oblation for the LORD, what every man hath gotten, of jewels of gold, chains, and bracelets, rings, earrings, and tablets, to make an atonement for our souls before the LORD. And Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold of them, [even] all wrought jewels."

My Response:

The only comment that I will make on this passage is that one should back up and [read the whole chapter](#) before drawing any conclusion. If one reads the chapter they will find that the men of Israel won a battle, and a certain amount of the spoil was given to them. They voluntarily chose to give all of the jewelry as an offering to God. No one asked them to do it, they did it of their own free will.

It is sad that Blankenship chose this Scripture as an illustration of "pride & idolatry" (as he puts it). This is actually a beautiful example of a group of people giving a free-will offering to God out of their abundance.

Rev. Blankenship writes:

In Gideon's day, Ishmaelites & Midianites were distinguished from the Israelites by their use of Jewelry & earrings.

Judges 8:24 "And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey. (For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.) 25 And they answered, We will willingly give them. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earrings of his prey. 26 And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred

shekels of gold; beside ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that were about their camels' necks. "

My Response:

There are two important things to note about this passage:

1. The translation of "earrings" is debatable. JFB commentary claims that it should be "earring" (singular) ((A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments by Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown, Judges 8:24)). The NASB translates it "earring" as well: "Gideon said..."I would request of you, that each of you give me an earring from his spoil"" (Judg. 8:24 NASB).
2. Even if it does say "earrings" and not "earring," it is very dangerous to read too much into this passage. Frankly, we do not know why Gideon asked for the earrings. We must remember that jewelry was not always worn for the same purposes that we wear it today. It was often worn for idolatrous purposes (as in Gen. 35:2-4) or even for amulets and charms ((Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible, Gen. 35:4)). There were many, many different reasons to wear jewelry in the ancient Near East. It is extremely dangerous to read a passage like Judges 8:24, see that Gideon asked for the earrings from his fallen enemies, and then make a general inference (such as, "It's a sin to wear jewelry").

Rev. Blankenship writes:

REMEMBER: ISRAEL IS A TYPE OF THE CHURCH

My Response:

I do not see the connection between not wearing jewelry and Israel being a type of the church. Remember, Israel was never commanded to not wear jewelry. It was not in the Mosaic Law. (It is important to remember that the Mosaic Law defines sin,

like Paul said in Romans 7:7).

The point that I am making is this: If wearing jewelry is such a horrible sin, then why is it not once mentioned in the Mosaic Law or the New Testament? Why do we have to go searching through stories in the Bible, piecing together stories that involve jewelry, and try to form a doctrine out of it? Don't we think that it would have popped up just once in the Pauline Epistles if it was a sin? Wouldn't it have been a problem in at least one of the early churches? I know that this is an "argument from absence," but it is still powerful.

Rev. Blankenship writes:

LISTEN TO GOD'S JUDGMENT UPON THE PROUD, HAUGHTY WOMEN OF ISRAEL

Isa 3:16 "Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: 17 Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts. 18 In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon, 19 The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, 20 The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, 21 The rings, and nose jewels, 22 The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, 23 The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils."

Even the articles of clothing that can be worn innocently, are judged here because of the spirit of pride. The same could be true for our generation.

My Response:

I'm going to repeat the passage from the NASB for clarity's sake (the wording of the KJV is very archaic in this passage):

Isa 3:16-23 NASB

(16) Moreover, the LORD said, "Because the daughters of Zion are proud And walk with heads held high and seductive eyes, And go along with mincing steps And tinkle the bangles on their feet,

(17) Therefore the Lord will afflict the scalp of the daughters of Zion with scabs, And the LORD will make their foreheads bare."

(18) In that day the Lord will take away the beauty of their anklets, headbands, crescent ornaments,

(19) dangling earrings, bracelets, veils,

(20) headdresses, ankle chains, sashes, perfume boxes, amulets,

(21) finger rings, nose rings,

(22) festal robes, outer tunics, cloaks, money purses,

(23) hand mirrors, undergarments, turbans and veils.

Now, let's look at this passage and find a list of things that women can't do (according to Blankenship) because they're a sign of pride:

1. No wearing headbands
2. No wearing veils (sorry to all you girls getting married soon)
3. No wearing headdresses
4. No wearing sashes
5. No wearing perfume
6. No wearing festal robes (no more dressing up for special occasions)
7. No wearing outer tunics (ouch!)
8. No carrying money purses
9. No using hand mirrors

10. No wearing underwear (hey, the Bible said it, not me!
It's in verse 23)

See a double standard here? If this passage is saying that we can't wear jewelry because it's a sign of pride, then it's also saying that we can't do the 10 things I just listed.

It can be one way or the other, it can't be both.

Needless to say, God doesn't have a problem with you wearing underwear (He wants you to, I promise). The issue in this passage is pride. Pride can manifest itself in a lot of different ways, and God will deal with it as necessary, on an individual basis.

You see, God dealt with Israel nationally, but He deals with us individually.

He dealt with the women of Israel on a national level because of the sins of the nation. He deals with women today on an individual basis. Instead of dealing with the symptoms, He deals with the cause. Pride can manifest itself in jewelry, sure, but it can also be manifested in hundreds of other ways—and that applies to both males and females. A fancy hair-do (ladies) or a fancy car (guys) can be just as much a symbol of pride as wearing 100 pounds of jewelry. You see, these things aren't inherently evil on their own; They only become a problem when they're a symptom of pride. In the Old Testament God dealt with the symptoms, in the New Testament He deals with the cause.

Rev. Blankenship writes:

**** SOMETHING TO THINK about : If pride & vanity is not the reason for wearing jewelry, then it should be no problem to dispose of it for the sake of your Christianity.*

My Response:

This argument could be made for anything (a car, a house, a

pet rabbit—anything). The fact of the matter is that God will tell you if He wants you to get rid of something. That's between Him and you. The New Testament lays down no other pattern. Let me repeat that: The New Testament lays no foundation for the idea that we should give up jewelry because it's "a sign of pride"!

(I should also point out that the argument that Blankenship makes here is probably the most common argument made for "holiness standards." Whenever I have discussed holiness standards with a UPC minister they retreat very rapidly to this argument. (I am talking about discussing it with them when I was still a member of the UPC! Even when I agreed with what they taught, they still had to retreat to this argument whenever I played devil's advocate.) They back-peddle and say things like, "Don't you want to get as close to God as you can? Why do people fight against these standards so much? They must be rebellious!" My answer is, "Yes, I do want to get as close to God as I can, but not wearing jewelry or make-up has nothing to do with whether or not a person is close to God. The only time a woman should have to give up these things is if she feels God has personally told her to for some reason.")

Rev. Blankenship writes:

If we want the glory of God in our life, in our homes, and our church, let's deliver ourselves of our symbols of our vanity. Take these things into consideration when choosing your dress & appearance, etc. Some good advice for our local church is the following...

Philippians 4:5 "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord [is] at hand." (Excessive jewelry is improper for a child of God)

My Response:

The word that the KJV translates "moderation" in Phil 4:5

actually means "gentleness" or "unassertiveness ((The Complete Word Study Dictionary, G1933))." Of course, temperance in all things is a good practice for a Christian to have; but that hardly justifies Blankenship's conclusion (he concludes farther down in this article that no ornamental jewelry should be worn at all). That's not temperance or moderation, that's abstinence, and the Bible does not support that conclusion!

Rev. Blankenship writes:

What about the New Testament? (subject here is wives:)

I Peter 3:3-4 "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But [let it be] the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, [even the ornament] of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price"

REMEMBER BALANCE: It is obvious that a total prohibition of gold was not the point. For if that verse was an instruction to not wear any gold, then we would have to submit to not wearing any apparel either. Surely that is not the point! (smile)

My Response:

Finally, Rev. Blankenship and I agree! The point of this passage is not to say that women should not wear gold any more than it is to say that women should not wear clothes!! The point of this passage is that women's concern should be about inward holiness more than outward looks!

Rev. Blankenship writes:

For us a good rule is : Let's not wear things that have no value or use, other than ornamentation. Example of things that do have use beside ornamentation: wedding rings, tie tacks, watches, glasses, etc....

My Response:

Unfortunately, Blankenship and I must leave our new-found agreement behind, for I cannot agree with what he just said. When he instructs people to not wear anything that has "no value or use, other than ornamentation." He steps out of the Bible and starts laying arbitrary rules (stumbling-blocks) that have no Scriptural basis.

Rev. Blankenship writes:

LISTEN FOLKS... IF YOU WANT TO GROW IN GOD LOOK FOR PRINCIPLES AND NOT JUST LAWS IN THIS BIBLE. Therein lies real growth material!

My Response:

This is absolutely right! So why is he doing the Bible study? First, the "Laws" about jewelry don't exist in the first place, and second, he should be dealing with the source of the problem (pride) and not the outward symptoms!

Rev. Blankenship writes:

Here is one of those principles... (recall the story of Esther)

Esther 2:12 " Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with other things for the purifying of the women;) 13 Then thus came every maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house. 14 In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name. 15 Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the

uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her. 16 So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. 17 And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti."

LADIES: You do not need to endeavor to be overly trendy in the worlds eyes... Listen to the chamberlain... (pastoral ministry) God is pleased with woman and men that will concentrate on holiness.

My Response:

I commented on this passage in my [response to Blankenship's study on Make-up](#), so I am not going to do so again here. Suffice it to say that this phrase—"[S]he did not request anything except what Hegai, the king's eunuch...advised"—does not mean that she did not wear make-up or jewelry!

Also—this is off-topic—I think it's funny that he compared the "chamberlain" to the pastoral ministry. I'm not sure why the KJV translators translated "eunuch" as "chamberlain," and "harem" as "house," but they did. I'm going to cite part of the passage from the NASB so you can see what the text really says:

Est 2:14-15 NASB

(14) In the evening she would go in and in the morning she would return to the second harem, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the concubines. She would not again go in to the king unless the king delighted in her and she was summoned by name.

(15) Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai who had taken her as his daughter, came to go in to the king, she did not request anything except what Hegai, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the women, advised. And Esther found favor in the eyes of all who saw her.

I wonder what my pastor would think if I told him that his role is illustrated by the eunuchs who were in charge of the harems in the Old Testament? Now that would be an interesting conversation!

Rev. Blankenship writes:

SO WHAT SHOULD YOU DO WITH OUR JEWELRY THEN?

Exo 25:1 "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2 Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering. 3 And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass, 4 And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, 5 And rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood, 6 Oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense, 7 Onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate. 8 And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. 9 According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it."

Take an offering – AND BUILD GOD A CHURCH!

My Response:

I think his conclusion is stretching it a bit. Go ahead and take an offering of everyone's jewelry, but be sure to tell them to skin their pet badgers first. Oh, and to give all of their blue, purple, scarlet, and fine linen. And if they raise

livestock then they need to give all their goats' hair too.

See where this is going? It's like Isaiah 3:16-23; it can be one way or the other, it can't be both ways. If God put this passage in the Bible because He wants us to give up all of our jewelry, then He also wants us to give up all of the other things listed here.

My Conclusion:

Blankenship's selection of Scriptures is very one-sided, and they were often taken out of context. What he did is called "proof texting"—I.e., searching the Bible for Scriptures to verify what you already believe to be true. Proof texting is the opposite of what we should do—search the Scriptures to find out what God says is true.

Allow me to cite a few other Scriptures dealing with jewelry in the Bible, and you can tell me whether or not God hates it:

Isa 61:10 NASB

(10) I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, My soul will exult in my God; For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

Psa 45:6-9 NASB

(6) Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom.

(7) You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of joy above Your fellows.

(8) All Your garments are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia; Out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made You glad.

(9) Kings' daughters are among Your noble ladies; At Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir.

Isa 49:18 NASB

(18) "Lift up your eyes and look around; All of them gather together, they come to you. As I live," declares the LORD, "You will surely put on all of them as jewels and bind them on as a bride.

Eze 16:8-14 NASB

(8) "Then I passed by you and saw you, and behold, you were at the time for love; so I spread My skirt over you and covered your nakedness. I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine," declares the Lord GOD.

(9) "Then I bathed you with water, washed off your blood from you and anointed you with oil.

(10) "I also clothed you with embroidered cloth and put sandals of porpoise skin on your feet; and I wrapped you with fine linen and covered you with silk.

(11) "I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your hands and a necklace around your neck.

(12) "I also put a ring in your nostril, earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown on your head.

(13) "Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your dress was of fine linen, silk and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour, honey and oil; so you were exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty.

(14) "Then your fame went forth among the nations on account of your beauty, for it was perfect because of My splendor which I bestowed on you," declares the Lord GOD.

Am I reading this correctly? Did God just tell Israel that He covered her with jewels, gold, silver, bracelets, and even gave her earrings and a nose ring? Hmmm. Doesn't sound like God hates jewelry to me!

So, what does God hate? Pride! Read the next three verses...

Eze 16:15-17 NASB

(15) "But you trusted in your beauty and played the harlot because of your fame, and you poured out your harlotries on every passer-by who might be willing.

(16) "You took some of your clothes, made for yourself high places of various colors and played the harlot on them, which should never come about nor happen.

(17) "You also took your beautiful jewels made of My gold and of My silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself male images that you might play the harlot with them.

See? God has no problem with jewelry. He does have a problem with pride! No matter how the pride manifests itself—whether it be through a fancy car today or fancy underwear in Isaiah—God hates it. Jewelry's just not the issue. It never was, and it never will be.