



Seek The Old Paths

“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths. . . and walk therein”
(Jeremiah 6:16)

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BLOOD IN THE LAND OF PROMISE

Bill Boyd

The end may be near, but the current conflict in the Gaza strip is not a sign of the second coming of Christ.

Hebrews 11:9 tells us that Abraham sojourned in “*the land of promise*.” We read that promise in Genesis 15:18: “*In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.*” The text continues to identify ten nations of people who were then occupying this land: “*The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites*” (Gen. 15:19-21). (At this point in my father’s teaching, he would sometimes humorously add “*and the termites and the stick-tights.*” Silly as that may sound, it usually generated a chuckle, and he would gain the attention of any children that were present. There are reasons he has been an effective teacher.)

This “*land of promise*” stretched far beyond the hills between Dan and Beersheba. I recently viewed a map delineating this land. It included parts of modern Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Turkey. Some identify “*the river of Egypt*” with the Nile, but it is more likely a wadi between Israel and Egypt that sometimes flows north from the Sinai Peninsula to the sea. “*The great river*” is identified in the text as the Euphrates River. The land divided among the tribes in the book of Joshua does not

allot this greater land area to specific tribes. For this reason, some have thought this promise to Abram has not yet been kept. Some go so far as to say that conflicts arising over these lands will be signs that the end is near.

Genesis 15:18-21 (above) tells us that the land was promised. In addition consider the following: “*Unto thy seed will I give this land*” (Gen. 12:7); “*I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession*” (Gen. 17:8); “*Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. . . Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee*” (Gen. 13:14-17); “*I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession*” (Gen. 18:17).

Notice how God promised to give the land to Abraham’s seed “*for ever*” and as an “*everlasting possession.*” When we read such language, we may tend to think in terms of eternity, but His was not a promise for eternity. There is coming a day in which “*the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be*

burned up” (2 Peter 3:10). In eternity, these lands will no longer exist. Neither does the English word, “*forever*,” always mean “*eternal*” either. We may look at the expanse of the Great American Prairie and say that it goes on “*forever*,” but we know it is bound by mountains, seas, and woodlands. We say “*forever*” because it extends beyond the horizon and the end is not in view. “*For ever and ever*” means beyond the horizon and then some, but the mountains are still out there. That is what these Hebrew words mean. A servant was to serve his master forever (Exodus 21:6), but not into eternity. The old Sabbath was to be kept forever (Exodus 31:16), but that law is no longer binding today. The Aaronic priesthood was forever (Exodus 40:15), but it ended. God was to dwell in Solomon’s temple forever (1 Kings 18:13), but that temple has long been gone. Jonah was in the belly of the fish forever (Jonah 2:6); I suppose three days and three nights would have been long enough for any of us. The Hebrew words translated “*for ever*” and “*everlasting*” are relative terms that should be understood in context. They refer to the full time under consideration.

God gave these promised lands to descendants of Abraham and Israel, but in order to possess it they had to receive it and retain it. This they failed to do. We read in the book of

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Blood in the Land...



Guest Editorial

FATALISM (WHAT WILL BE WILL BE)

James W. Boyd

*Those who believe and obey will be saved.
Those who don't obey will not. Man has the right to
decide in which group he will be.*

There are doctrines and philosophies that contend neither we nor God can or will do anything to affect what happens. This idea is so absurd, contrary to history, contrary to reality, but most importantly, it is contrary to the Bible. It is difficult to know where to begin our discussion.

You deserve no credit for whatever you do because you could not help yourself — you just had to do it because it is fate that forced you. It was already set beforehand. God had nothing to do with it. The philosophy of fatalism denies the existence of God. Without God there obviously is no providence of God — which the Bible teaches.

Fatalism is a doctrine that all events occur according to a fixed and inevitable destiny which individuals neither control nor affect. The future, therefore, is fixed irrespective of our attempts to affect it. Preceding events have no connection with events that follow. All happens according to natural law. Nothing is conditional. No God is involved anywhere at anytime. So is the Fatalism doctrine.

Closely related is the philosophy of **Determinism** — a belief that all physical events and human actions are determined or settled by external forces before they happen. The external forces are the stars, planets, elements of earth, sun, moon, etc. This doctrine may or may not include the existence of God, but He is inactive. Everything is in accordance with some mysterious decree issues by some mysterious power perhaps ages ago. It denies there has been or can be anything miraculous.

Another similar doctrine is **Predestination**. This is a belief in fate or unchangeable destiny, inescapable, but is determined by God, even the

salvation or condemnation of each individual. “He that is born to be hanged shall never drown.” That’s the idea. In religion, it is one point in Calvinism that says God determines which individual will be saved or lost before he/she is born and man has no power whatsoever to change what God has determined.

EXPRESSIONS THAT REFLECT THIS IDEA

People may say they do not believe these doctrines but they speak phrases that promote them. “His time has come.” “This was meant to be; or not to be.” “If the Lord wills,” as if God forces something according to a fixed determination. “Whatever will be, will be,” as if everything is already set and we are just waiting for it to happen. “Your days are numbered,” as if it is already decided how many days you will live even before you’re born. The **Horoscope** is based on some external forces on human activity. We just need to accept whatever it tells us because that’s it. It is so much silliness.

Then why discuss it? It’s against the Word of God, that’s why. We shall show how it denies the providence of God and contradicts several Biblical points, including God’s providence. It denies the nature of man and his power of choice or volition. That means man is not responsible for what he says, does or thinks and therefore not accountable. (This is what the advocates of Fatalism really want).

THE GOLDEN BULLET OF DEATH TO FATALISM

Before we consider the Scriptures, consider one very logical, sensible point. Advocates of these philosophies busy themselves in teaching others

about them and trying to persuade others to accept them. Why do they do that? They have already proclaimed we cannot decide! They have said nothing we do or don’t do effects anything! How can anybody choose to believe in Fatalism when you have no power of choice? It is already settled. You can’t change it. What do they expect to change by teaching it? Any philosophy that contains within itself its own destruction is not deserving of acceptance.

FATALISM OR THE GOSPEL

You cannot believe both. The Gospel appeals to man to make a willful decision to come to Christ for forgiveness of his sins. He can determine his own destiny by what he decides to do regarding Christ.

GOD’S PREDESTINATION

Some things have been predestined and some things still are. Elements of truth in false doctrines are how they gain attention. The scheme of redemption is according to God’s eternal purpose (Eph. 1:3; 3:11). The Biblical doctrine regarding salvation is that God has already determined who will be saved and lost; not according to individuals, but according to classes of people. Those who believe and obey will be saved; those who don’t obey will not. Man has the right to decide in which group or class he will be.

Some have been heard to suggest that maybe God will not condemn anybody after all. Where do they get such tripe? They obviously do not believe “thus saith the Lord.” In some unexplained manner they have become wiser than God regarding what He “might” do even though it is contrary to what He has said He will do.

The Bible is replete with prophecy and fulfillment. Sometimes the prophecies are conditional and sometimes unconditional. Those that are conditional are not settled until the conditions are either met or discarded. There is validity in cause and effect (Gal. 6:7-8).

The providence of God has been predetermined (Matt. 6:33). But this is conditional, isn’t it? People are taught to obey the Gospel. How can they if they have no power of decision that affects things?

It is predetermined all shall be resurrected and judged. Nothing man can do will alter that. Physical death

is inevitable (Heb. 9:27). The day of the Lord will come (2 Peter 3:1). That will be.

Peter says the end of our faith is salvation of our souls (1 Peter 1:9). What if one has no faith? Will he be saved anyway?

FATALISM IS IDOLATRY

Idolatry denies the true and living God and substitutes something else like the sun, moon, stars, mountains, animals, rivers, weather, etc. These things are in control according to Fatalism. Fatalists have goddesses that determine the course of human life and have special names for such things.

Fatalism violates the power of human choice. Yet, Moses made a choice (Heb. 11:24-26). Moses urged Israel to make a choice (Deut. 30:19). Elijah called for a choice (1 Kings 18) at Mt. Carmel. Joshua said, “Choose ye this day whom ye shall serve” (Josh. 24:15). But he was not as “schooled” as fatalists today and didn’t know that was impossible. Agrippa had a choice after hearing Paul preach (Acts 26). We have to make a choice whether to believe the Bible or some fatalist who has made the choice to accept Fatalism.

WHY FATALISM IS DANGEROUS

Fatalism denies man is responsible for what he does. That leaves the door

wide open for him to do whatever he wants because, “I couldn’t help it. It was already determined.” Man does not want to be accountable to God or anybody else. He wants “freedom” to do whatever he wants to do — answering to nobody. It is the same reason people are atheists. But doesn’t the Bible teach there will be the Judgment (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:12; Rev. 20:12)?

We cannot believe Fatalism and the Bible at the same time. Therefore, this doctrine denies anything is immoral, religiously wrong or ethically corrupted. How could it be? It is already set. Morality involves choice, standards and conditions. Excuses must be condoned that say, “I can’t help it.” Yet, Scripture teaches a difference between right and wrong, righteousness and unrighteousness.

More deadly, *Fatalism denies the providence and power of prayer.* What good would prayer do if nothing we or God can do to change whatever has already been decided? We may not know all we would like about the providence of God and how He operates in every case. But He has said He does and that prayer is effective (James 5:16-18) and teaches us how to pray.

SUMMARY

If Fatalism is true, nothing matters. We are just robots programmed

to carry out what some power has determined. Nothing is intentional, accidental, coincidental or by choice. It is useless to preach the Gospel and the invitation from Christ is a farce. The cross was for no purpose; mercy is invalidated; grace is foolishness; obedience of no value; promises are null and void; blessings are ruled out; life has no meaning, purpose or goals; there are no standards to follow and we are without hope. What a glorious situation!

Furthermore, Fatalism offers us nothing in return for all we have lost in burying Christianity. It is totally negative and destroys everything Christians consider worthwhile. All we can do is just “live it out.”

THE FOLLY OF FATALISM ILLUSTRATED

What would be the use of playing a game if the winner is already determined? We are like watching a re-run of a game already played and the winner has already won.

The truth is God’s Word and God’s Word is truth. Fatalism is of the devil and cannot be believed. Maybe it has been fatalistically determined. I stop at this point.

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Blood in the Land...

(Continued from page 89)

Judges, “The children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites” (Judges 1:21); “Neither did Manasse drive out the inhabitants of Bethshean” (Judges 1:27); “Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites” (Judges 1:29); “Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron” (Judges 1:28); “Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho” (Judges 1:31); “Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Bethshemesh” (Judges 1:33).

The angel of the LORD chastised the people for their failures. He came from Gilgal to Bobhim and said, “I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with

the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this? Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you” (Judges 2:1-3).

God kept his promise; it was the people who failed. Joshua tells us, “the Lord gave unto Israel **all the land** which he swore to give unto their fathers... **There failed not** ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; **all came to pass**” (Joshua 21:43-45). Again, we read, “ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that **not one thing hath failed** of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; **all are come to pass** unto you, and **not one thing hath failed** thereof” (Joshua 23:14). Not only were they given the land, but David “recovered” it. “David smote

also Hadadzezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates” (2 Samuel 8:3). If they never had it, David could not have “recovered” it. Solomon reigned over it. “*He had dominion over all the region on this side the river, from Tiphshah even to Azzah, over all the kings on this side the river: and he had peace on all sides round about him*” (1 Kings 4:24). Nehemiah affirmed it. “*Thou art the Lord the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham; And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous*” (Nehemiah 9:7-8).

Stephen believed it. “*The God of*

glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee... he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him... But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt... Our fathers that came after brought in with Joshua into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers” (Acts 7:1-2, 5, 17, 45).

God gave Israel the land of promise. They were slow to receive it, but for a time they had it all. Their ability to retain it was conditional. Moses said, “And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God” (Deut. 28:1-2). Twice Moses said, “if.” In this context, “if” means “conditional.” Rebellion and disobedience would have consequences. “Because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the LORD thy God, it shall come to pass, that as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. And the LORD shall scatter thee among

all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other” (Deut. 28:62-64).

Israel did not obey God. The nations around them harassed them and occupied their inheritance. The Assyrians removed the inhabitants of the ten northern tribes and so scattered them among the nations that they lost their identity. The Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and carried the inhabitants away. The Persians allowed the Jews to return, but the Persian kings retained control of the land until Alexander the Great wrested it from them. After the death of Alexander, the Grecian rulers of Egypt and the Grecian rulers of Syria fought back and forth over control of the area. During a time of weakness, the Maccabees arose from among the Jews to exert their independence. The heirs of the Maccabees fought among themselves and asked Pompey to settle their disputes. Pompey did so by exerting his own rule over the land.

The Romans allowed the Idumean family of Herod to reign in Judea, but in time, replaced them with their own appointed governors. When the Jews rebelled, the Roman armies again destroyed Jerusalem. The control of the land went from Rome to Byzantium, to the Arabs, to the Crusaders, to the Muslims, to the Albanians, to the Russians, to the Germans, to the British. The inhabitants came to be called Palestinians.

In the aftermath of World War II Jewish refugees from Europe came to this land, and with the backing of the United Nations they established the modern state of Israel in 1948. Im-

mediately, conflict between the Palestinians and the Jews erupted, and their conflict continues to this day. Some see these conflicts as fulfillments of Bible prophecy, but the promises made to Abraham and his seed have long since been fulfilled and forfeited. Their “for ever” is over.

The news from Gaza is disturbing, the brutality is sickening, the reactions are frightening, the political ramifications are ominous, and religious sensationalists are again poised to prey on the ill-informed. The end may be near, but the current conflict in the Gaza strip is not a sign of the second coming of Christ. “Of that day and hour knoweth no man... Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come... be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh... Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing... The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of” (Matt. 24:36, 42, 44, 46, 50).

We do not know what will happen from now until the Lord returns, and even if we did know, such knowledge would serve no spiritual purpose. We already know how to respond to God, come what may. It is always “patient continence in well doing” (Rom. 2:7), for it is written, “the just shall live by faith” (Habakkuk 2:4; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38).

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THE PROPER EXPLANATION OF JOHN 3:16

Carl O. Cooper

The fact is, John 3:16, when taken in its proper context, teaches that salvation is by works of obedience when accompanied by proper faith.

It's true! This verse, read in its proper context does not teach “saved by faith alone”. In reality, the context of this verse teaches just the opposite. It teaches we are saved by faith, when accompanied by proper works. Now if you are associated with one of the denominational churches,

just how many times have you heard that said? Never, right! Almost all of the people in the various denominational churches read John 3:16 and when they interpret the meaning of this verse, based on their own “world view” of salvation, they conclude that salvation is obtained by “faith alone.”

They almost always include another doctrine and they say that “works have nothing to do with being saved.” This is common teaching by most of the denominational churches around us. But the fact is, John 3:16, when taken in its proper context, teaches that salvation is by works of obedi-

ence when accompanied by proper faith. Let’s take a closer look at these verses and you can see, without doubt, the proper meaning for yourself.

John 3:14-16. *“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

What in the world does Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness have to do with being saved by faith in God’s only Begotten Son? Be careful here because this sets the context of what these Scriptures are trying to get us to see. Moses lifting up the serpent is very important if you really do want to understand what is being taught here.

Do you remember the story of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness? It’s found in Numbers 21:8-9. Let’s look at these verses and see how they apply to John 3:14-16. *“Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, **when he looketh upon it, shall live.** And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, **when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.**”*

The story goes like this: The Israelites had been released from slavery in Egypt. They sinned against God in the wilderness and God sent poisonous snakes among them in order to teach them to repent. If they were bitten by one of the “fiery serpents” they died. But God made a way for these people to be saved. It required two things. The first thing that was required was a faith in God that would cause them to obey God’s instructions and do what He required them to do. If they followed God’s instructions as He required them to do, they would be saved. The second thing they had to do was obey God and look at the serpent that Moses had placed on a pole. If they

did this, God said they would not die from the bite of the snake. Sounds easy, right?

But let’s put this into proper perspective. Here is a part of the picture that we seldom even think about or consider. Let’s look at Exodus 12:37-38: *“And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children. And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle.”*

Wow! What a crowd of people. The Bible tells us it was six hundred thousand men, plus women and children. Most scholars number this nation of people to be from 1.5 million to 2 million people. Have you ever considered this? They lived in tents. There were no permanent houses available for them in the wilderness. If we were to consider four people to a tent, that would be about 500,000 tents. What a city of tents and people. According to the internet, the population of Forsyth County where I live (which includes the cities of Winston Salem, Kernersville, Clemmons, King, Lewisville and others) was 260,202 in 2021. The population of the people of Israel was 7.5 times more people that we have today in the entire county where I live in North Carolina. What does this information have to do with looking at the serpent Moses placed on a pole? Well, just suppose you were in my county of Forsyth and you were bitten by a poisonous snake. If you could be saved from this snake bite by looking at a serpent on a pole located somewhere over in downtown Winston Salem, would you find some way to get there so you could see it? Or would you be stubborn and rebellious and refuse to look at the snake on the pole? Would you claim that looking at the serpent was not necessary because we are saved by “faith only” and works have nothing to do with our salvation? Somehow, I just don’t think you would refuse to do the work of obedience God has required you to do.

The same is true with the context of John 3:16. You can see now how the statement in John 3:14 about Moses lifting up the serpent applies to our salvation today. Yes, it’s clear. Faith is required, alright. But so are works of obedience that God has commanded. Look at these verses in James 2:19-

24. With this new information, these verses should now become Chrystal clear. *“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that **faith without works is dead?** Was not **Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?** Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. **Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.**”*

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THE GREAT COMMISSION COMMANDS WATER BAPTISM, NOT PRAYER

Jason Patrick Hilburn

Do you know how John prepared people for the Savior? He was “preaching the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mark 1:5; cf. Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38). People were being baptized in water “to flee the wrath to come...unquenchable fire” (Matt. 3:7-12). John was getting people ready for the Great Commission of Jesus who had come to save people from their sins and would thus command the whole world to be baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins. Yes, the Savior commanded baptism, knowing that the whole purpose of His Great Commission was to save people!

All four Gospel accounts of the Great Commission either explicitly or implicitly include water baptism, and on the first day the Great Commission was carried out, guess what the lost people were told to do:

1) Were they told they were already saved because they now believed in Jesus (Acts 2:37)?

2) Were they told to pray? No, they were told, “Repent, and be baptized, every one of you in the name of

Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins...Save yourselves” (Acts 2:38,40).

The pattern of water baptism for salvation is seen throughout Acts — to “wash away sins” (Acts 22:16). Prayer was not mentioned at all in the Great Commission because that is not what people do to be saved — to become Christians. That is what people do AFTER they have been baptized in water to become saved — forgiven (Prov. 28:9; John 9:31; Acts 8:12-24; 1 John 1:9; 2:12; 1 Peter 3:12, 20, 21).

The Savior said, “*he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*” (Mark 16:16). He did NOT say, “He who believes and prays shall be saved.” But, that is exactly what is being taught by so many today. There is no account of any alien sinner, living under the New Covenant, being commanded to pray to become saved, but we read of thousands being baptized for the forgiveness of sins! How is it then that “asking Jesus into your heart” is perhaps the most widespread “plan of salvation” these days, even though it is not in the Bible at all?

How is it that we have so many churches convincing people they are saved, even though those people have not done what God commanded to be saved? If those churches do eventually baptize people, they tell them it is for a different purpose than what God said. Maybe this happens so often because most people do not study for themselves, but unknowingly put their trust in false teachers, or maybe they simply have not studied enough to learn how the Scriptures harmonize.

Friends, it is past time to get things like this figured out, and if you want to study this further, I will be glad to help because I love you and care about your soul.

Take time to read these passages: Prov. 16:25; 28:9; Matt. 7:13-27; 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47; John 3:5; 9:31; 12:42, 43; 20:23; Acts 9:6-19; 17:11; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-5, 16-18; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 5:26; Col. 2:11-13; 2 Tim. 2:15-18; Heb. 10:22; James 2:19-26; 1 Peter 1:22; 3:12, 20-21; 1 John 6-9; 2:12.

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POINTING FINGERS AT OTHERS

Roger D. Campbell

See if any of this sounds familiar: the prime minister or president blames the legislature and the legislature blames the top ruling figure in the country. The national government blames the state/provincial governments and the state/provincial governments blame the national government. The coach blames the players and the players blame the coach. The teacher blames the parents and the parents blame the teacher. The husband blames the wife and the wife blames the husband. The overseers blame the congregation and the congregation blames the overseers.

When we say “pointing fingers,” we refer to placing the blame for something on someone else. If a blatant

mistake occurs, some activity does not go well, or if something is left undone that should have been done, people often begin pointing fingers.

Finger-pointing is not something that is limited to one gender, one culture, one financial class of people, or those from one level of educational training. It is something that folks from all walks of life do — it knows no geographic boundaries.

Finger-pointing has been around since the population of the earth was only two people! After Eve and Adam violated God’s instructions by eating fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they began making excuses. Their excuses involved pointing fingers at someone else, as if blaming

someone else for their misdeed somehow would erase the reality of their own sinful conduct.

After the transgressions took place in the Garden of Eden, God asked Adam, “*Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat*” (Gen. 3:11)? What was Adam’s response? “*The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat*” (3:12). Adam admitted that he ate the fruit, but, at least in part, he was pointing a finger at someone else. He pointed a finger at Eve, saying *she* gave him the fruit. And, his words also had “the ring” of blaming God for giving him the women who gave him the fruit.

Well, what about Eve? She, too, did some finger-pointing. When Jehovah asked her, *“What is this that thou hast done”* (Gen. 3:13), she admitted she had eaten the fruit, but her complete statement was, *“the serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.”* Instead of taking full responsibility for her failure, she pointed a finger at the serpent.

In the next book of the Bible, we again read of a person who sinned against God, but rather than “man up” and show remorse for his evil-doing, he tried to place the blame on someone else. We are talking about Aaron (the first high priest of Israel and older brother of Moses). What sin did Aaron commit? He led the Israelites in building and worshipping a golden calf. Moses’ question to his elder brother was, *“What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them”* (Exodus 32:21)? Aaron’s wimpy, finger-pointing answer was, *“thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf”* (Exodus 32:22-24). At whom did Aaron point a finger? At “the people.” Aaron gave a cowardly, non-sensical, blame-others response. God’s people deserve better leadership than that!

In contrast to the finger-pointers in the world, when King David messed up by committing adultery and other evil deeds, rather than blame someone else, he “told it like it was.” With no stipulations or attempt to minimize his guilt, David declared, *“I have sinned against the LORD”* (2 Sam. 12:13). His sin was ugly, but his spirit of repentance and taking responsibility for his grievous error was beautiful.

The Bible says, *“So then each of us shall give account of himself to God”* (Rom. 14:12). It also is written that the God of judgment *“will render to each one according to his deeds”* (Rom. 2:6). When we stand before the judgment seat of the risen Son of God, pointing a finger at others will not remove the guilt of any transgressions we have committed.

If a sin was committed, but we had no involvement in it, we are not

responsible for it. On the other hand, if we broke God’s law or failed in some manner when others were counting on us, let us be mature enough to admit our fault, take responsibility

for our action, and strive to do better in the future.

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SOME FACTS ABOUT CHRISTMAS

Jon Gary Williams

This season of the year is enjoyed by people everywhere. It is a time of being together with family and friends, a time of special meals, sharing cards and decorating trees. It is a time of exchanging gifts, a time when little children are enthralled with Santa. We all appreciate the closeness this holiday season brings to each of us.

However, as we enjoy the happiness this season brings, we need to remind ourselves that Christmas, to the Christian, is really nothing more than a national holiday. Though the world associates it with the birth of Jesus, the knowledgeable Christian is aware that this is not the case.

Following are some interesting facts about this time of year with which some may not be familiar. It is good to be aware of these things, for sometimes we can allow the trappings of the world to influence our thinking.

First, “Christmas” is not in the Bible. It did not originate with the apostles and was not observed by the church of the 1st century. Actually, the observance of Christmas (as the birthday of Christ) began many years later and the term “Christmas” was not coined until the 11th century.

Second, the date of Christ’s birth is unknown. Through the years while many different dates were argued, it was not until the 5th century that December 25th came to be generally accepted.

Third, the word “Christmas” is indicative of the Catholic religion. It became a religious observance (a “mass”) in honor of Christ, or “Christmas.” Hence, December 25th is set aside by the Catholic Church for a special “midnight mass.”

Fourth, the observance of Christmas was influenced by pagan customs. In 313 A.D., when the Roman Emperor, Constantine, made Christianity the state religion, many pagans came into the church bringing with them some of their crude customs. One of these was the festival of “Triumph Over Darkness” honoring the Mithraic rites of the birth of the Sun which was celebrated with riot and merrymaking. To accommodate the pagans, church leaders merely changed this to a celebration of the birth of Christ, whom they were told was their “True Light.”

For the above reasons, and many more, churches of Christ do not place any significance on December 25th as a “holy day” to observe the birth of Christ — such observance is of human origin. If Jesus wanted His birth to be celebrated in a special service on a special day He would have said so. However, neither He nor the apostles said anything about such a practice. Of this, the Scriptures are completely silent.

Instead of setting aside one day a year, we should rejoice every day that Jesus was born into this world to bring salvation to lost man (Luke 19:10). This is the true spirit of being a child of God. And we must remember, the only thing Christians are told to observe is the *death of Jesus*. This is done each week as Christians gather to partake of the Lord’s supper (Matt. 26:26-28; 1 Cor. 11:23-26).

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

“Dear brother Robinson and Leoni C/C. What an outstanding article!!! I’m talking about the one in the October issue of STOP by James W. Boyd. I have read the inspired writing, plus comments, a number of times about Elijah and Ahab at Mt. Carmel, but it has never settled in my mind as this time.

There are books, lectureships and periodicals warning of the possibility of the C/C losing around 85% to denominationalism, just as it did 150 years ago over the controversy of the missionary society and instrumental music. Yet there are many who don’t want to accept them. I have known of (Christian?) parents who didn’t even want bulletin articles written about children going to the restroom and water fountain during worship periods. They even said that was man’s tradition. Other parents heeded and praised the articles. I call such bulletin articles a help to training and bringing your children up in the nurture of the Lord by teaching them the importance of coming to the assembly prepared to worship in reverence, respect and obedience to His worship. I praise brother Robinson and STOP for the plain bold teaching of God’s word” ...**Joe C. Turbeville, Dresden, TN.** “God bless America” ...**Elsie Weatherford, Saltillo, MS.** “James Ray Dickson has passed away” ...**Bradford, TN.** “While mankind is drifting into sinful darkness and out of hearing distance of God’s word, it is very good to be blessed with lessons from the *Seek The Old Paths* publication. Thank you very much” ...**Allen & Irene Take, Cache, OK.** “Please cancel the publication” ...**Jerry Shonk, Seymour, TN.** “Alton Fonville has passed away” ...**Colleyville, TX.** “So happy to spread the good news through *Seek The Old Paths!* Yours is a powerful tool using His word in a wicked world. We know not all will accept truth because of preachers false teachings, etc. As Christians we must only look at the Word of God” ...**M/M Steve March, Granbury, TX.** “Please remove our name from your mailing list. We now get STOP at our local congregation. Thank you for all the years you sent STOP to us” ...**James & Becky McCallister, Hurricane, WV.** “I have access to the STOP on-line therefore please remove me from the mailing list. Thank you and may God continue to bless this great work” ...**Jerry Hudson, Memphis, TN.** “Please take my name off of your mailing list. God bless America. We sure need it” ...**Jimmy Driggers, Palm Coast, FL.** “I appreciate brother Garland Robinson and the dear brethren at Leoni C/C for your publication “*Seek The Old Paths* and for the excellent and biblically sound articles appearing each month. I pray that the “God of all grace” continue to establish and strengthen your labors in the Gospel of Christ” ...**Jeff Grimes, Brantley, AL.** “Thank you so much” ...**Glenn Smith, Natchez, MS.** “Thank you very much” ...**Joe Dickey, Counce, TN.** “Thank so much” ...**William Young, Gainesboro, TN.** “Thank you” ...**Sheila Danzell, Shreveport, LA.** “Please stop my hard copy mailed subscription, please. Thank you!” ...**Leonard Rogol, Birmingham, AL.** “Every month, your STOP is one of my highlights” ...**Donald R. Hoover, church of Christ at Morganville, Dunlap, TN.** “I enjoy reading your publication” ...**Jewel Hamilton, Sugar Land, TX.** “We continually give thanks to you for the work that you do in publishing STOP. I am confident your efforts encourage and educate all those who take the time to read it. I hope this letter finds you well and you are both motivated and possess the physical abilities to produce STOP for many, many years to come. Thanks for all you do. May God bless you and His work” ...**Rick Brewer, elder, Neely’s Bend C/C, Madison, TN.** “I enjoy *Seek The Old Paths*” ...**Jonas W. Ingram, Warren, MI.** “The Newberry C/C has closed its doors. Please keep us in your prayers. Thanks” ...**Newberry, MI.** “Would like to get your publication. Thank you” ...**Carol Ann Woods, Milan, TN.** “I would like to receive the old paths literature” ...**Rick Tribby, Odon, IN.** “I would like to receive seek the old paths free please”

...**Scott Gleespen, Marion, OH.** “Thank you for this monthly publication” ...**Mrs. Shirley M. Blair, Chicago, IL.** “Enjoy reading the good articles” ...**Evelyn Medlin, Texarkana, TX.**

TODAY’S ISRAEL AND PROPHECY

Political and religious leaders have advanced a false notion regarding the present day Israel. They are often heard to refer to Biblical prophecies and apply them to the existent nation. Especially do they claim that the Bible promises the land of Palestine to Israel. Israeli people cite the Bible as the basis for their claim to certain territories. They fail to realize that those prophecies have long ago been fulfilled (Joshua 23:45; 23:14). To look to the Bible for any word concerning Israel today is to look for that which does not exist.

That Palestine would be Israel’s homeland was a conditional promise. Ancient Israel violated the conditions (Josh. 23:15-16).

It is a serious matter when the destruction of millions may hang in the balance in a struggle for territory and one side leans erroneously on the Bible for its claim. There is no more reference to present-day Israel in the Bible than there is Guam, Argentina or Dixie. Such notions spring from premillennialism, which is a false doctrine taught by many denominations.

James W. Boyd

Seek The Old Paths is a monthly publication of the **Leoni Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is FREE, being supported by the contributions of both individuals and congregations. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3, 2 Tim. 4:2, Titus 1:13, Titus 2:1 and 2 Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless it is marked “not for publication.” The church building is located at: 2132 Old McMinnville Hwy, Woodbury, TN 37190.

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