



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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CHRIST IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON UNTIL...

Marvin L. Weir

Since most denominational religious groups (and some man-made religious groups that claim to be non-denominational) eagerly proclaim that “*Christ is the reason for the season,*” and that we need to “*put Christ back in Christmas.*” I was amazed to read about the great number of denominational “churches” that canceled services on Sunday, December 25th in 2022! As “Christmas” is considered to be “*the second-most significant religious holiday of the year, behind Easter,*” I immediately wondered **why** so many “pastors” and their members canceled all services on Sunday if Christ is indeed the “reason for the season.” How can one demand that “Christ must be put back into Christmas,” and then so conveniently cancel Lord’s Day services where they profess to honor Him? The hypocritical Pharisees certainly have a lot in common with many modern-day religious groups!

Let us examine one argument given by “religious leaders” for canceling Sunday services on the 25th of December.

Fletcher Lang, who received his degree from *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*, is lead “pastor” of City on a Hill Church in Somerville, Massachusetts. In explaining **why** his group decided to cancel a Lord’s Day service he wrote:

Why? Our context makes a Christmas Day service uniquely difficult. And though we won’t be having services on Christmas, we participate with sister congregations in a joint **Christmas Eve** (emp.

mine, MLW) service that allows us to gather and create a space for nonbelievers in our city. We believe there is biblical freedom to cancel a church service under these conditions. ... Lastly, we have freedom to meet or not on special Sunday’s like this. We don’t think canceling one Sunday worship gathering puts us in danger of violating the Hebrews 10:25 command to not forsake gathering together. In this passage, the author of Hebrews addresses a group of people in the church who have made it a habit of forsaking the gathering. One Sunday does not a habit make. Let him who has never missed a church service throw the first stone! We all agree Christmas Day is a special day. It’s not “just another Sunday.” But whether your church decides to worship together on Christmas or not, honor the Lord in your decision.

There are so many errors in Lang’s statement that one hardly knows where to begin.

First, he admitted that “our context makes a Christmas Day service uniquely different.” It is certainly **not** a Scriptural context as there is **no** mention of a “Christmas Day service” in God’s Word!

Second, he declares that even though they will not have services on “Christmas Day,” they will join other congregations “in a joint Christmas Eve service...” Where in God’s Word does one read about His people engaging in “a joint Christmas Eve serv-

ice?” “Christmas Eve” was on a Saturday, and Saturday is **not** the Lord’s Day. There is **no** authority in the Scriptures to move an authorized Sunday assembly to a Saturday or any other day of the week!

Third, “we believe there is biblical freedom to cancel a church service under these conditions.” Really! No Scripture was given. Does the Word of God grant one the **freedom** to dispense with the Lord’s commands?

Fourth, Mr. Lang says, “Lastly, we have freedom to meet or not on special Sunday’s like this.” Where in the Scriptures does it teach that there are “special Sundays?” Should not every Sunday be **special** as it is the day designated in the Scriptures for members of the Lord’s church to assemble (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:20) and “*worship in spirit and truth*” (John 4:24). Since when is one Sunday **special** and other Sundays **not so special**? You are correct if you are beginning to think that there are **no** Scriptures (a thus saith the Lord) for man-made doctrine!

Fifth, Mr. Lang would have one to believe that Hebrews 10:25 “addresses a group of people who have made it a habit of forsaking the gathering. One Sunday does not a habit make.” It is surely the truth that some early church members were **forsaking** the assemblies. Surely some members forsook the assemblies more times than others. Mr. Lang argues one must have formed a “habit” of some

(Continued on page 95)

Reason For The Season...



Editorial... THIRTY FIVE YEARS AND COUNTING

Garland M. Robinson, editor

Many have asked through the years how *Seek The Old Paths* got started. Now that it is in its 36th year of publication, I thought I would give a bit of history about it.

In 1986, a few preachers (scattered across the state of Mississippi) got together to discuss starting a Bible lectureship called “The Annual Mississippi Lectures.” Its design was to encourage and edify the churches across the state. To accomplish that goal, it would be conducted in a different part of the state and hosted by a different congregation each year. The first year the lectureship was located in Hesterville (1986), the second year in Tupelo (1987), the third year in Meridian (1988) and the fourth year in Corinth (1989). At the end of the fourth year it was decided to keep it in Corinth. The last lectureship was in 2003 when I moved to McMinnville, Tennessee.

In the summer of 1989, it was decided to start a state-wide monthly Gospel Journal that would reach far more people than the lectureship could. Yours truly (Garland Robinson) would be its editor, while Ken Bursleson (at Meridian) and Sidney White (at Tupelo) would be associate editors. Though our target audience was within the state of Mississippi, we never turned anyone away who wanted to receive it. As a result *Seek The Old Paths* has grown into an inter-national publication. We’re currently mailing nearly 15,000 a month. It started out being printed on 8.5”x14” size paper and then in the next year or so it was expanded to 11”x17”. The postage is the same for either size, but the larger sheet provided 57% more space for articles. From its beginning it has been filled with Gospel teaching and has never sold advertising space.

The first six years of the lectureship continued as the **Mississippi Lectures** (1986-1991). In 1992 its name was changed to the **Seek The**



Old Paths Lectures. Each year saw growth in interest and number. Only God knows the number of souls that have benefitted. A total of eighteen lectureships were conducted. Beginning the second year it was decided to provide a book of the sermon outlines of the lessons. The church at Corinth purchased 200 books to hand out free to those who attended. These books have been out of print for many years. However, they are now being put back into print one at a time and are available on Amazon. Until they are all completed, just search for my name (Garland Robinson). The themes were:

- 1987 “The Mission of the Church”
- 1988 “Christ, Our Perfect Example”

- 1989 “Old Testament Questions, New Testament Answers”
- 1990 “New Testament Questions”
- 1991 “Lessons from the Judges”
- 1992 “Most Needed Lessons for Today”
- 1993 “Preaching Needed for the Nineties”
- 1994 “Immorality”
- 1995 “The Church at Corinth”
- 1996 “The Seven Churches of Asia”
- 1997 “The Church at Colosse”
- 1998 “The Home”
- 1999 “The Uniqueness of the Church”
- 2000 “Dangers Facing the Church (Changing Views)”
- 2001 “Traditions of Men (Vain Religion)”
- 2002 “Divine Authority (Leadership in the Church, Home, Government)”
- 2003 “What God has Joined Together, let no Man Put Asunder”

“*Seek The Old Paths*” gets its name from Jeremiah 6:16, “*Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.*” Its mission and purpose would be to teach the whole counsel of God while defending the faith. Its mission statement is found in Jude 3, “...ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” 2 Timothy 4:2, “*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*” Titus 1:13, “...*Rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith.*” Titus 2:1, “...*Speak thou the things which become sound doctrine.*” 2 Peter 1:12, “...*I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.*”

The first issue of STOP was October 1989. It was numbered Vol. 1 No 1, but beginning Jan/92 the numbering was changed to reflect the calendar year, thus: Vol. 3 No 1. Therefore, the September 2024 issue completed 35 years (October 1989-September

2024). We're now well into our 36th year of publication. The first issue contained a statement from the elders at Corinth, MS: *"This is the first issue of a gospel paper that is being sent forth to teach and admonish members of the Lord's kingdom, especially in the state of Mississippi. Our goal is to teach God's word faithfully in every area. There is so much that needs to be done by way of instructing brethren to grow in the Lord. Study these things carefully!"* The articles in that first issue were: **Seek The Old Paths, Demands Of The Old Paths, Wrath Of The Old Paths, and Rewards Of The Old Paths.** Beginning in Feb/93, George Pudzis began doing the layout (arrangement) of the pages and continues to this day. He has been and continues to be an invaluable asset to this work.

From day one, the paper has been FREE and will always be FREE. It began under the oversight of the elders of the East Corinth Church of Christ (1989-2003); the East End Church of Christ in McMinnville, Tennessee (2004-2011); and now presently under the oversight of the Leoni Church of Christ in Woodbury, Tennessee (2012-). It is supported by the free-will contributions of individuals and congregations.

At its beginning I did the printing on an offset press and then many years later using a combination of an offset press and a Digital Duplicator. Now, it is completely printed on a

Digital Duplicator. There have been dozens and dozens of volunteers who have assisted in its production through the years. Jim Green (1935-2024) assisted in printing the blue masthead. He came to Corinth and then McMinnville to print three months at a time. There is no way I could name all these precious people.

Getting each issue ready to mail is a multi-step process which includes: laying out the material, printing (blue & black ink: 73,000 sheets of paper through the press), assembling, stapling, folding, taping, addressing, boxing, and mailing. There are usually around 15-25 people who help each month. All the funds contributed have gone toward its printing and distribution. No one has ever been paid in its production. However, donuts and coffee are often available.

For years, every step of the process to get it ready for mailing was done by hand. Once printed, each sheet would be folded in half, then opened back up to insert the inside sheet by hand. The two sheets (now assembled) would be passed to the next person who would position it on a table-top stapler 2" from the top and push a button to staple it, then position it 2" from the bottom and push the button again to insert the second staple. It would pass to the next person who would run it back through a folder again to do a "double fold" to get it ready to attach the mailing label.

Many changes have been made

by the Post Office over the years. The process is much easier now since we bought a "collating" machine that assembles the two sheets, passes it to a "booklet maker" machine that aligns the sheets, staples it, folds it, and rolls it out to be fed by hand into another folder which reduces it to its mailing size. Afterwards, several brethren take boxes home, apply a "tab" across the staples to keep it from springing open so it won't get hung in the sorting machines at the Post Office. One day a month several meet to apply the mailing label and place them in trays to be taken to the Post Office. Sorting to different places around the county is made easier by the "barcode" printed on each label. Also, well over 5,000 are mailed in bundles. These have to be stuffed in envelopes, sealed and then labeled. As you can see, the whole process is quite a production including many steps. Want to come and help?

All the back issues are available on-line at: seektheoldpaths.com. They are searchable and free to print and distribute (as many do around the world). Our mailing list to receive the paper copy is limited to USA addresses only. However, we have a digital mailing list where you can be informed (via email) when each issue has been posted on the internet. If you want to be added to the digital list, send me your address.

IS THE LORD'S CHURCH DYING? (3)

Rod Rutherford

The Lord's church today is thriving in India, Africa and other parts of the world because they are still preaching "the old Jerusalem Gospel."

The church in America needs to get back to doing the same and we will see church grow once again!

Some suggest the present lack of growth of churches of Christ in the United States may eventually result in our extinction. While it is true that the Lord's church in America is not experiencing the rapid growth of the 1940s, '50s and '60s, the church continues to multiply rapidly in many other parts of the world. This is espe-

cially true in the nations of Sub Sahara Africa and in the country of India. In previous articles we have noted some of the reasons for our decline in growth. In this article, **we will consider additional reasons for the lack of growth of the Lord's church in the United States in recent years.**

The most significant reason for

the lack of growth in the United States, in the opinion of the writer, is what some term "liberalism." Many churches of Christ no longer take the strong, strict doctrinal stance that most congregations and individual members took during our periods of greatest growth. Members generally are no longer known as "people of the Book"

who are ready to “give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15). It also appears that many are unequipped and unwilling to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

Our lack of Bible knowledge, coupled with the popular view that we must not “judge” those who differ with us, has opened the doors to numerous false doctrines and practices which have arisen among us and threaten to divide the body of Christ (Matt. 7:15-20; John 7:24; Rom. 16:17-18). We shall briefly notice some of the more prominent errors which are now widely taught or tolerated among the churches.

1. Marriage, divorce and remarriage. Our Lord’s teaching on marriage, divorce and remarriage is plainly taught in Matthew 19:1-12. Simply stated it is: “One man, one wife, for life!” One exception is given to it: if one’s marriage partner commits fornication, the innocent partner has the right to divorce the adulterer and remarry. No other reason is given in the Scriptures for dissolving a marriage with a right (authority) to remarry. Note that the right to remarry is given **only** to the innocent partner. Perhaps the major problem elders have to deal with to keep the church pure is in regard to marriage, divorce and remarriage. Some elders and preachers have tried to “water down” the Lord’s teaching by allegedly finding other exceptions for divorce and remarriage. Some simply ignore the problem and accept without question any who wish to become members.

2. A changing hermeneutics. We are told to “rightly divide (handle aright-ASV) the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15) and to “Hold fast the pattern of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13). Some contend for new hermeneutics (a new way of understanding the Scriptures). They decry the idea of there being a “pattern” to which we must adhere in obedience to the Gospel (see Rom. 6:17-18) or in the worship and organization of the church (John 4:24; Acts 14:23). Therefore, they have accepted “contemporary worship” (what people like). Some even advocate that “all of life” is worship, thereby opening the door to anything anyone wants to do and call it worship (Gen. 22:5; Acts 8:27-28).

3. The roles of men and women in worship. The Bible is clear on the God-given roles for men and women in worship (1 Tim. 2:1-15). In the past, the Lord’s church has strongly held to God’s plan. However, the radical feminist movement in society has put pressure on elders to go contrary to God’s plan. Some say they are “re-studying the subject.” They then conclude that God did not really mean what He said. They then begin to use women to lead in every part of the worship including preaching and serving in the eldership.

4. Instrumental music, choirs, solos and praise teams in worship. The New Testament clearly teaches unaccompanied congregational singing in the assembly (Eph. 5:18-20; Col. 3:16-17). There is no authority for instruments of music or special singing groups. To add such is to go beyond that which is written (2 John 9; Rev. 22:18-19).

5. The Lord’s supper on days other than the first day of the week. First century Christians met on the first day of the week to commemorate the Lord’s death for our sins. Jesus met with His apostles on the first day of the week following His resurrection (John 20:19-26). The church began on Pentecost which always occurred on the first day of the week (Lev. 23; Acts 2:1). It is not surprising then to find the church meeting on the first day of the week for the partaking of the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7). We have no authority for partaking of the Lord’s supper on any other day, or on any other occasion, except the first day of the week which is called “the Lord’s Day” (Rev. 1:10).

6. A weakening of our stand on denominational baptism. Immersion in water for the remission of sins is clearly taught in the New Testament (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:4ff). No other “baptism” is acceptable. However, some are now contending for accepting persons from denominations on the basis of their denominational baptism, regardless of the purpose for which they were baptized or their knowledge of the one true church into which they are added by the Lord (Acts 2:41,47).

7. Denial of the doctrine of eternal punishment. Jesus plainly taught the doctrine of Hell as eternal punishment (Mark 9:42-48). In fact, He had far more to say about Hell

than anyone else in the Bible! In the parable of the sheep and the goats, He pictured the results of the great Judgment Day when He will judge all men: “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal” (Matt. 25:46). The words “everlasting” and “eternal” describing the duration of the length of punishment, as well as that of Heaven, are both translated from the same Greek word. This means that *Hell* will continue just as long as *Heaven* does, and vice versa!

8. A misunderstanding of the relationship of faith, grace, and works in our salvation. The Bible clearly teaches that the ground of our salvation is God’s grace (Eph. 2:8-10). We do not deserve, nor can we ever merit (deserve) salvation. God had to take the initiative. However, we must receive (accept) God’s grace. The means of acceptance is clearly taught in Scripture (Heb. 5:9). It involves **faith** (Mark 16:16), **repentance** (Luke 24:46-47), **confession of Jesus Christ as Lord** (Rom. 10:9-10); and **baptism for the remission of sins** (Acts 2:38).

9. A failure to preach on the nature of the church as the one body of Christ. Denominationalism is contrary to the Lord’s prayer for unity (John 17:20-23). It is strongly condemned by the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 1:10-13). There is only one body which is entered into by the one baptism (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4-6; Gal. 3:26-27). Sermons showing the distinctiveness of the church of Christ used to be commonly taught and thousands took their stand on the New Testament teaching; but some are ashamed of such plain preaching today. If we do not believe those are lost who ignore the teaching of Scripture and join man-made churches rather than being added to the blood bought body of Christ by Gospel obedience, not only have we not saved their souls, but we have removed a major incentive for evangelism!

The Lord’s church today is thriving in India, Africa and other parts of the world because they are still preaching “the old Jerusalem Gospel.” The church in America needs to get back to doing the same and we will see church grow once again!

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(Documentation is available
for facts mentioned by consulting
the writer).

IS GOD'S WORD STRANGE TO YOU?

Jason Patrick Hilburn

Numerous truths are not being preached because of “political correctness,” and many people do not study the Bible at all; therefore, many things in God’s Word sound strange to people today.

God spoke of Israel and said: “I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing” (Hosea 8:12). God had revealed great and wonderful things, but the people had no interest in learning. They loved worldly things more than God (Hosea 4:6; 8:11-14). Even today great things from the Bible are no longer understood by most people. Numerous truths are not being preached because of “political correctness,” and many people do not study the Bible at all; therefore, many things in God’s Word sound strange to people today. Is God’s Word strange to you?

Does it sound strange that sometimes we must “judge” other people? Condemning someone for doing the same things you do is wrong, but if we have repented and are faithful, we are commanded to help others get right with God (Matt. 7:5; Gal. 6:1; James 5:19-20). In so doing, we must make judgments about what is right or wrong and who is right or wrong: “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24; cf. Matt. 7:1-20; Mark 6:18; Luke 17:3; Acts 17:11; Rom. 2:1-3, 20-22; 16:17; 1 Cor. 5; 6:1-11; 2 Cor. 7:10-12; Gal. 2:11; 1 Thess. 5:21; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15; 1 John 4:1; Rev. 2:2).

Does it sound strange that Christ has only “one church,” and that divisions (such as denominations) are sinful? Christ said, “upon this rock I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18). Christ is not a Head connected to many bodies, nor is He a Bridegroom with many brides. He is the Head of the one body of Christ, which is His church — His one true bride (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:22-33). “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the

same mind and in the same judgment...every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Cor. 1:10, 12-13; cf. John 17:20-23). If Christ was crucified for you, wear the name of Christ, not Paul, John the Baptist, Martin Luther, etc. Those who promote divisions are guilty of sin: “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom. 16:17; cf. Titus 3:10-11; 2 John 9-11).

Does it sound strange that there is a “certain way” God must be worshiped? “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24; cf. Lev. 10:3; Eccl. 5:2). True New Testament worship involves praying to the Father through His Son; singing without mechanical instruments of music; giving cheerfully on the first day of every week; preaching God’s Word, and taking communion on the first day of every week (John 16:23; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:20-34; 16:2; Eph. 5:19-20; Col. 3:16-17).

Does it sound strange that “nobody can be saved by faith alone?” “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? ... Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (James 2:19-20, 24). “But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:35). “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love” (Gal. 5:6; cf. Matt. 7:21-23;

Luke 6:46; Rom. 6:16-18; Heb. 5:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 2:3-6).

Does it sound strange that “one must be immersed in water to be saved?” “...While the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us...” (1 Peter 3:21; cf. John 3:5, 22-23; Acts 2:38; 8:35-39; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-5, 16-18; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 5:25, 26; Col. 2:11-13).

Does it sound strange that “a saved person can become lost?” “For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:3-4; cf. 2 Cor. 6:1; 2 Peter 2:20-22; Heb. 3:12-14; 4:1, 11; 10:23-31; 12:14-17, 28-29; Rev. 2:10; 22:19).

Does it sound strange that “there are no signs to foretell the return of the Lord?” “But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape” (1 Thess. 5:1-3; cf. Matt. 24:42, 43; 2 Peter 3:10).

Does it sound strange that we have been “in the last days” since the first century A.D. (the last dispensation of time)? “But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days...” (Acts 2:16-17; cf. 1 Cor. 10:11; Heb. 9:26-28).

Perhaps we should study to the extent that fundamental principles such as these are not strange to us anymore, but very familiar!

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ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI

John Chowning

Though simple and concise, the Holy Scriptures are also profound. Few sentences in God's word are more weighty than the four Aramaic words Jesus uttered shortly before He declared "It is finished", bowed His head, and gave up His spirit (John 19:30).

One Bible student observed that "this cry of Jesus has more profound content than any mortal can hope to comprehend...This is exactly what finite man should expect when contemplating the Infinite."

This simple question — "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46) — generates much food for thought and reverent meditation. Consider the following seven points to ponder:

"Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani" is a quotation of Scripture. It is the first verse of the Messianic psalm composed by David a thousand years earlier (Psalm 22:1). This psalm — which is so graphic and precise — has been aptly titled "David's Description of Calvary." In verse sixteen, it predicts the means of Jesus' horrific death, centuries before execution by crucifixion was even introduced into human history! Through the excruciating pain, our Lord still had God's word in His mind and on His tongue. His earthly ministry ended as it had begun — by quoting Scripture (cf. Matt. 4:1-11).

"Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani" is a prayer of horror. "Forsaken" is a harsh, stark, and heartbreaking word. When the apostle John introduces Jesus in his Gospel, he writes: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). The Greek preposition translated "with" is *pros*. It denotes a face-to-face relationship of love and intimate fellowship. This relationship is the antithesis of "forsaken." Never before in His existence had Jesus ever experienced the emotional and spiritual anguish and devastation which wallops someone when he has been abandoned by a loved one.

"Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani" is a startling statement. From the book of Genesis onward, the God of heaven consistently promises to be

loyal to His people. Consider the following declarations: "And, behold, I **am** with thee, and will keep thee in all **places** whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done **that** which I have spoken to thee of" (Gen. 28:15). "(For the LORD thy God **is** a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he swore unto them" (Deut. 4:31). "Be strong and of good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he **it is** that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee ... And the LORD, he **it is** that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed" (Deut. 31:6, 8). "And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee" (Psalm 9:10). "I have been young, and **now** am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psalm 37:25). "For the LORD will not cast off His people, neither will he forsake His inheritance" (Psalm 94:14). "**Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee**" (Heb. 13:5). The faithfulness of God is a significant trait of His holy character; yet here, Jesus' startling affirmation is that He has been forsaken by Jehovah!

"Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani" is an announcement of propitiation/atonement for humanity's sin. As foreshadowed by the Day of Atonement's scapegoat (Lev. 16) and predicted by Isaiah (53:4-6) at Calvary, Jesus bore our sins in His own body (1 Peter 2:24). God made Him who knew no sin to be a sin offering for us (2 Cor. 5:21). He propitiated God's wrath against all human ungodliness and unrighteousness. It was the only way God could be both just and the justifier of those who obey the Gospel (Rom. 3:26).

"Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani" is irrefutable proof of Jesus' complete obedience. Though the question of "Why?" was on His lips, Jesus never

wavered in His obedience to God's will. Being obedient to God to the point of death was an essential requirement for Jesus to be qualified and become the author of eternal salvation (Heb. 5:8-9). Like the patriarch Job, Jesus' love and loyalty to God and His will was independent of His circumstances.

"Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani" is a declaration of divine love for sinners. Hours prior to Calvary Jesus had stated to His apostles, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). The fact that Jesus died for His enemies — not His friends — demonstrates or showcases God's love in a way that sets it apart from all others (Rom. 5:8). From the cross, Jesus could save Himself from death or save us from the second death; He could not do both. He lovingly chose our salvation.

Not only did Jesus' love cost Him His life, His role in the eternal purpose of human redemption — from His incarnation to His ultimate delivering up the kingdom to the Father — has permanent ramifications. The Son — like His bride, the church — shall be subject to God after He has conquered and judged the devil and all evil (1 Cor. 15:27-28). Who can comprehend the breadth, length, depth, and height of such love?

"Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani" is a warning of sobering certainty. At Calvary, God poured out His wrath on His beloved Son. Though He had been beseeched three times in the Garden to let this cup pass, Jehovah's righteousness could not be compromised. If God spared not His own Son, it is a sobering certainty that He will not spare anyone who does not believe the Son. Rather, "the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). He who does not believe and obey the Gospel shall be damned (Mark 16:16). Hell is the eternal abode of the forsaken.

Four words: Incredibly simple, yet incredibly profound.

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Reason For The Season...

(Continued from page 89)

length in order to be guilty of forsaking the assembly. What is that magic number, Mr. Lang? Is it two, three, ten, or twenty times? The Lord has never given anyone the right to **forsake** any Lord’s Day assembling! Not one!

Sixth, he thinks he wins his argument when he says, “Let him who has never missed a church service throw the first stone.” Does Mr. Lang

not understand that “miss” and “for-sake” are not the same word? One who is sick or hospitalized will miss church services, but that person is not **forsaking** those services. One **forsakes** the assemblies when he can attend but because of wanting to do other things he chooses to do that of **his choosing** and skip what the Lord commanded!

Seventh, “we all agree Christmas Day is a special day. It’s not “just another Sunday. But whether your church decides to worship together on Christmas or not, honor the Lord in your

decision.” How is it that Sunday, December 25th is a “special day” and “not just another Sunday,” but one can cancel such a significant assembly because he wants to remain in his pajamas and stay at home with family?

These folks declare that “Christ is the reason for the season” **until** they decide they are free to forsake assembling together on what they proclaim to be the Lord’s birthday — a special day!

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SEDITIONS AND HERESIES

James W. Boyd

Such things as sedition and heresy against the way of Christ are not acceptable to God. It will bring certain damnation to those who are guilty of it.

Seditions and heresies are both called “works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:20). We need good definitions of these terms.

Sedition is defined as rebellion against lawful and duly appointed authority. It includes dissension, insurrection, with the attitude “not thy will but mine be done.” It has the disposition of Diotrefes who wanted preeminence (3 John 9). It reflects an attitude that will not submit to authority and seeks the overthrow of authority.

Heresy is defined, and closely associated with sedition, as not being in line, the opposite of orthodoxy, separate from the mainstream, a self-chosen doctrine, putting one’s own desires and designs above fellowship with God and the church. Heresy has to do with attitude and action. More specifically it is public and persistent denial of some of the fundamental points in the doctrine of Christ, doctrines that may be entertained by a professed member of the church that are contrary to the fundamental and distinguishing tenets of the church as set forth by Christ and the apostles. The Greek word from which it is translated refers to an opinion varying from the true exposition of the faith

of Christ.

Sedition and heresy go together, are closely related and one provokes the other.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES TO SEDITION

The Jews had a history of sedition and insurrection against all those who warred against them. The Persians were reminded of this. Ezra 4:15, “*That search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers; so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city (Jerusalem, JWB) is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have sedition within the same of old time: for which cause was this city destroyed.*” This was a warning from the enemies of Judah about the Jews who returned from captivity and were restoring the city. Israel had rebelled against Egypt, Syria, Assyria, Babylon and Persia was warned. This was done in an effort to cause the cessation of rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple. But documentation was cited that gave permission for this work and the Jews were not guilty at this time, though they had been guilty of it

(Continued on back page)

many times earlier in their history.

Barabbas was imprisoned for sedition and murder (Luke 23:19). There are no details of his actions but we know he was charged with murder (Mark 15:7) and being against Roman authority. Nonetheless, his release was allowed because the Jews hated Christ more than Barabbas, and Pilate feared the Jews more than he feared Barabbas.

Paul was wrongfully accused of sedition by Tertullus before Felix (Acts 24:5). He was called a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. This accusation was made because Paul taught the end of the Mosaic Law had come. However, Paul's teaching was not unlawful. He was just accused.

Koran, Dathan and Abiram lead an insurrection against Moses and his authority (Numbers 16). "You take too much upon yourself," they said to Moses. They wanted to share in that authority. The authority of Moses was of God.

In the church, authority belongs to Christ (Matt. 28:18; Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:23; Heb. 1:1-2; Matt. 5:17). Authority was delegated by Christ to the apostles (Gal. 1:11; 2 Peter 1:3; 1 Thess. 2:10) as they were guided by the Holy Spirit as promised (John chapters 14, 15, 16). The authority is now revealed in Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 2:12-13; Jude 3). Whatever is contrary to the authority and doctrine of Christ is heresy, false doctrine, ungodliness. It foments strife, rebellion and division.

Sedition can also be found in the home, school, government, church, work place, etc. The result of sedition is opposite that of unity. There is condemnation of the guilty (1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 1:27). Peace is disrupted; division occurs. Some say in essence, "Move over Lord. I'm taking charge. Don't get in my way." This is the tone of modern day "change agents" who want to revise the church to accommodate today's rebellious generation. Such will seal the doom of those guilty (Gal. 5:21).

BIBLICAL REFERENCES TO HERESY

The word translated "heresy" is sometimes translated "sect" as in Acts 5:17, 15:5, and 26:5. The Sadducees were called a sect (Acts 5:17), so were the Pharisees (Acts 15:5). The church was called that also (Acts 28:22). It has reference to a party that is separate from the rest. It is used nine times: six times as sect, heresy once, faction once and parties once. It is never used in a favorable light. The church was first considered a sect of the Jews rather than the new religion of Christ. It is used in a derogatory sense referring to followers of Christ (Acts 24:5,14; 28:22). The church was spoken everywhere against because of hatred against Jews and Christians.

Heresy is used to refer to some in Corinth who were abusing the Lord's Supper, creating strife and division in the church (1 Cor. 11:19).

It is used referring to false teachers (2 Peter 2:1). Heretics brought in damnable doctrines, moving in secretly, privily, without detection at first.

What was to be done about heretics? "A man that is a heretic after the first and second admonition, reject" (Titus 3:10). Why do some prefer to "run along" with heretics when they know they only harm?

In the Old Testament, people were taught not to hearken to the words of false prophets (Deut. 13:3). In the

New Testament some false teachers went from Jerusalem to Antioch and created division over the old law (Acts 15:24). Some preached a perverted gospel (Gal. 1:7). There are warnings throughout the New Testament of teachers of error. They come as angels of light (2 Cor. 7:11). They draw disciples away after them (Acts 20:30). They deny the resurrection (1 Cor. 15). They make worship vain by teaching the doctrines of men (Matt. 15:9). They transgress beyond the restrictions and boundaries of the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11). They contend for the old law, at least portions of it that fit their religion.

FALSELY ACCUSED

Paul and Silas were accused wrongfully of heresy (Acts 16:20-21; 18:13). They were accused of teaching men to worship contrary to the Law of Moses. What they did was to teach what the law and prophets taught; the things which were written. Paul denied the accusation was ever true (Acts 24:13-16) and it could not be proven.

Such things as sedition and heresy against the way of Christ are not acceptable to God. It will bring certain damnation to those who are guilty of it. It will also mean the condemnation of those who allow themselves to be misled and influenced by seditionists and heretics.

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