

LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

HARRY BOWERS EDITOR

AUGUST 2006

WHEN PEOPLE BECOME DOGS

There are certain sins which the Scriptures place those who commit them outside the race of mankind, and are described as “animals” and “beasts”. Examples of this are found in II Peter and Jude where false prophets are called “unreasonable animals, born as creatures of instinct” (II Pet. 2:12; Jude 10). Evil powers are pictured as “beasts” in Revelation and Daniel. Describing anyone as a beast or animal must show the ultimate contempt God has for them. To be described as being outside the race of mankind must be the most denigrating expression of sin that can be found in human language. Even the prostitute is called a “strange woman” (Prov. 2:16; 5:3, 20) and thus is still included in mankind by that term, but the term “dog” describing the homosexual (Deut. 23:18) places them outside the race of mankind. Paul describes them as having “exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire towards one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer God gave them over to depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper” (Rom. 1:25-28).

Considering the truths revealed here by the inspired Apostle how can anyone doubt the sinfulness of homosexuality? These words, however are descriptive of what goes on when people “refuse to have God in their knowledge”. It is to be expected that this would be a practice of those who have rejected the facts of God’s revelation and is not as great a concern as the fact that the practice of homosexuality is more and more becoming an accepted life style of the professing church. Paul asks “what have I to do with judging outsiders? those who are outside, God Judges” (I Cor. 5:12,13). He had just stated: “I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people, I did not at all mean the immoral people of the world, for then you would have to go out of the world. I actually wrote to you not to associate with any so called brother if he should be an immoral person (verses 9-11). So my concern is not so much the chosen lifestyle of the world, such sins are expected to be prevalent among those who do not know God, but when such behavior is accepted and even condoned in the religious sector, that is another story. It is one thing to have a real concern for the souls of those who are gay, but quite another thing to accept their behavior.

Kenneth S. Wuest, in his commentary *Romans in the Greek New Testament* states that the word “burned” in Romans 1:27

should be translated “to burn out” He then states “they receive in themselves that retribution which was of necessity in the nature of the case because of their deviation from the norm.” He is saying that homosexuality is the “burning out of a man” Homosexuality then is the *burned out* end product of rebellion against God. How can a so called religious institution ordain to the ministry one who has been burned out and given over to a depraved mind? The so called sexual revolution has given birth to a generation burned out.

One would hope that the scholars of the religious world would voice some resistance to this so called revolution but the truth of the matter is the religious world is becoming a part of the revolution. I have in my library several books by Helmut Thielicke, a noted German theologian. In his book *The Ethics of Sex* he states: “There can be no doubt that the Old Testament regarded homosexuality as a crime punishable by death...but the question is whether and to what extent the Old Testament law can be binding upon those who are under the Gospel Law.” Evidently he had never read the first chapter of Romans. Another popular commentary used by many preachers is William Barclay’s *Daily Bible Study Series*. In his commentary on Romans 1:18-32 covering 11 pages, he doesn’t mention the word “homosexual” or “lesbian”. Merrill Unger, a popular fundamentalist writer, in his widely read *Unger’s Bible Dictionary* in commenting on the Old Testament passages dealing with homosexuality fails to mention that the penalty for such behavior was death. When church publications demand that we treat lesbians as “individual human beings” not as homosexuals, and we are asked by religious authorities to by-pass God’s view of the matter in favor of man’s views, practice ordination of gays to the ministry and support same sex marriages, then the first victim to fall is morality.

In order to meet the challenge of the assaults of the new humanism which demands sympathy and support of the gay agenda is not to cave in to the demands of the extensive campaigns to abolish anything representing the Biblical teaching on the subject. Rather in order to meet the challenge of the humanist and homosexual assaults on our culture, the church must return to a true preaching of the Word of God and to the restoration of Biblical principles in its practice before the world. We must condemn all forms of lascivious living, but at the same time hold forth clearly God’s promises of forgiveness, eternal life, and the Holy Spirit to all who will “repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). It is time the church rid itself of the silly “worship wars” it is currently engaged in and begin to expound without compromise the truths of God’s word concerning the sexual immorality curse which has been cast upon society while the church argues about what is contemporary and what is traditional. (that’s all for now)

WHO IS THE ANTICHRIST?

In an interesting book entitled *Anti-Christ, Two Thousand Years Of The Human Fascination With Evil* by Bernard McGinn, professor of Historical Theology at the University of Chicago Divinity School, he traces the belief of and the supposed identity of the anti-Christ from the year 100 to the present century. The early church fathers, up until the third or fourth centuries did not try to identify who the anti-Christ was or would be, they did write about great evil to come upon the world in the future through the anti-Christ. Upon the rise of the papacy and the Roman Catholic church it was not uncommon to identify the anti-Christ with the Pope (a position held by both Martin Luther and Alexander Campbell and many early restoration preachers). He then traces the history of beliefs in the identity of the anti-Christ ranging from Muhammad and Napoleon to Gorbachev, Reagan and Saddam Hussein. In the last few decades even the movies have got into the act with: *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), *The Omen* (1976), *Damien* (1978) and *The Final Conflict* (1981). Add to this the modern craze over the heretical volumes of the *Left Behind* series and the conclusion is no wonder people are confused and frightened about the anti-Christ.

The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible pretty well sums up the present day belief concerning the anti-Christ by saying: "the anti-Christ is a demonic-human adversary of Christ who will appear before the second Advent as the last oppressor and persecutor of the Christians, only in turn to be defeated and overcome by Christ in his return to earth... Also he is not the adversary of the Jesus of history; on the contrary, he is to be the opponent of the apocalyptic Christ on his return to earth" (Vol. 1, pp 140). This is the common held view of most fundamentalist prophecy preachers today.

Contrary to the learned scholarship of the past ages and the modern speculation of prophesy preachers, if we take the Scriptures at face value we can know who the anti-Christ is. This is a pretty bold statement, but a careful and sensible look at the Word will prove it to be true. The letters of I & II John are the only books that mention the anti-Christ. The book of Revelation is silent on the subject, although many like to equate the anti-Christ with the beast of chapter 13, but there is nothing in the text to indicate this. Also it is common to identify the "man of sin" in II Thessalonians 2 as the anti-Christ. Here too there is no Scriptural reason for such an interpretation. (More on this later).

Note carefully as John identifies the anti-Christ: "Children, it is the last hour, and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen" (I Jn. 2:18). The "last hour" is probably the last of the Jewish system which passed away in 70 AD with the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem. John says there are "many" antichrists. This means we cannot confine him to one man. Further: "Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son" (ver. 22). Plainly, anyone denying Christ and the Father is the antichrist. Note also: "every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God, and this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that is coming and now it is already in the world" (I Jn. 4:3). The word "spirit" is not in the original Greek, so he is saying "this is the antichrist" and was already in the world. If he was already in

the world he is not coming in the future. Finally: "many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist" (II Jn. 7). Again John identifies the antichrist as one who does not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh and "many" who "have" gone out into the world (past tense). Taking these Scriptures at face value we see that John plainly identifies the anti-Christ. Confusion has resulted by reading into them more than is there.

But what about the "man of sin (lawlessness) who is to be revealed, the son of destruction who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God displaying himself as being God." (II Thess. 2:3,4)? Paul states that something was now restraining him, and the mystery of lawlessness was already at work and the one now restraining him would be taken out of the way. When this restraining power was taken out of the way he would be revealed but the Lord would slay him with the breath of His mouth and bring him to an end by the appearance of his coming in spite of his power and signs and wonders with which he deceived those who were perishing (verses 7-10).

The context puts this passage in Paul's day. He said: "Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? And *you know* what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed (ver. 5,6). If they knew what was restraining him then this could not have been something 2 or 3 thousand years later. It had to be something in their day and time. It was only after the ascension of Nero to the throne that Roman persecution against the Christians began. Throughout the book of Acts the persecution of the Church was not from Rome but from Judaism. In fact Paul was protected by the Romans and made use of the Roman laws (Acts 18:12ff; 25:11-12; 28:19). Paul wrote II Thessalonians during the reign of Claudius Caesar, who was favorably inclined toward Christianity. Christianity was free from the sword of Rome until Nero began persecution in AD 64. As long as Claudius was emperor, Nero, a lawless and evil man whose hatred for Christians was well known, was without power to commit public lawlessness such as his intense persecution that broke out after the death of Claudius (poisoned it is thought by Agrippina, Nero's mother). This fits the statement by Paul "only he who restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way".

Nero was, after Claudius died, (taken out of the way) revealed to be the tyrant that was hidden until he became emperor. He was revealed as a lawless one after setting fire to Rome and blaming it on Christians to justify his intense persecution. But how was he slain with the breath of the mouth of the Lord at his coming and appearance? We must understand that the term "coming of the Lord" is not restricted to his second appearing at the end of the age, but is descriptive of His coming in judgment as he "rules in the midst of his enemies (Psalm 110:2). The Scriptures describe the judgment of God as "the Lord on a swift cloud, and is about to come to Egypt" (Psalm 19:1). Jesus uses the same language in describing His coming in judgment upon the Jews for rejecting Him as the Messiah (Matt. 24:30; 26:64). I am saying Nero was the man of sin whose reign was destroyed by "the breath of His mouth" that is by the preaching of the Word by His chosen vessel, the Church.

