



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

DEFIANCE OF AUTHORITY the increasing phenomenon of the last days

Based on a message preached at a young people's meeting in Claremore Free Presbyterian Hall, Clogher, Co. Tyrone -- by Rev Ivan Foster

Sin is, in essence, a defying of the authority of God. Furthermore, it involves the establishing of an alternative authority -- man himself. Sin is a refusing to obey God and an obeying of the demands and desires of man's fallen and depraved nature. Sinful man desires to usurp the throne of God and occupy it himself.

The history of man's defiance of God is like the incoming tide at the seashore. The waves roll in and recede, but the coming and going of the waves cannot disguise the fact that there is a steady advancing up the beach by the water.

In the history of mankind, there have been times when man's rebellion has rolled in and advanced against decency and order. Then there have been times when man's rebellion has receded. I refer to those times of reformation and revival when, under the preaching of the gospel in the power of God, standards of behaviour within the nations affected have been raised and there has been a forcing back of the flood of iniquity that threatened to swamp the nation. But it must be noted that overall there is to be seen an incoming tide of sinfulness that is advancing inexorably higher and covering the world.

I. THE BIBLE PROVIDES US WITH CLEAR WARNINGS OF THE HIGH TIDE OF REBELLION THAT IS APPROACHING

In Matthew chapter 24 verse 3, the Lord Jesus is answering a double question. *And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?* The things they refer to in the first part of their question are the events surrounding the destruction of the temple that the Saviour had just referred to in verse 2. The latter part of the question is what interests us particularly. The Saviour's answer to it is contained in the rest of the chapter and is directed especially, though not exclusively, to the Jewish believer. His answer reveals the intensifying lawlessness and defiance of God that will culminate in the erecting of the abomination of desolation in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, just before the end of the age, verse 15. The erecting of this abomination will signal the beginning of an unparalleled time of persecution aimed in general at the land of Israel. That period will last 42 months and then Christ will return, verses 29-31, Revelation 13: 1-10. This feature of the last days, that is the period between the two advents of Christ, is described for us by the Holy Spirit in a number of places in Scripture.

Apparently Paul referred to it whenever he was teaching the churches that were formed under his ministry. This is clear from what he writes to the church at Thessalonica. In I Thessalonians 5: 1-2 and II Thessalonians 2: 5, it is evident that Paul had fully instructed them in these matters. He instructed Timothy in the matter also, II Timothy 3: 1-5. I point this out in order to underscore that a knowledge of this subject was counted vitally important by Paul.



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In Paul's description of the last days, please note that he calls them perilous times. The word *perilous* means *fierce* ; it is so translated in Matthew 8:28. *And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way* . That which made the men fierce was the dominance of the devil and that which will make the last days perilous will be the devil's increasing power and influence in the affairs of men. Notice the features of these days as stated by Paul in II Timothy 3:1-5.

1. This rebellion has its roots in self-love . Self-loathing and shame over sin is in God's eyes a precious thing. Whenever the sinner sees his sin and mourns brokenly over it and loathes himself for it, then God calls him blessed, Matthew 5:3-4. Consult Psalm 34:18, 51:17; Isaiah 66:2; Jeremiah 31:18-20 for further proof of what I say. But Paul says that men shall be *lovers of their own selves* . From this self-love spring covetousness, boasting, pride, evil speaking of others and of God (blasphemers). It reminds us of Absalom. *But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him* , II Samuel 14:25. His love of himself led him to despise his father David, and go on to rebel against him and expel him from the kingdom for a time, before being defeated and killed by his father's loyal soldiers. Absalom is a very clear type of the antichrist of the last days and the lawlessness and rebellion that will be a feature of his government.

2. The defying of authority begins with a defying of parents . It begins in the home, the foundation of all order in society. When order breaks down in the home then it is inevitable that it will break down in society generally. I need hardly point out to you that just such a trend is to be seen at work today. Paul makes this point clear in verse 2. The word *disobedience* comes from a Greek word that means *anti-obedience* . It is not occasional disobedience but an attitude of disobedience. Again it reminds us of Absalom. The attitude that is encouraged today through television and various publications, aimed at the young, is that of disrespect for parents. Confrontation with parents is frequently featured in young people's programmes. Invariably the parents are depicted as out of touch and vindictive and the young as victimised and, in the end, proved right. Young people today have been encouraged to set up their own kingdoms within their homes. Many have responded to the encouragement so that their room becomes a "no-go area" for Mum and Dad! There they listen to what they like, watch what they like, read what they like and cover the walls of the room with posters and pictures which depict just where their hearts lie and what they consider as the important people and things of life. This is the spirit of an age that is moving ever closer to out and out rebellion against God, the author of all authority.

3. The rebellion spreads . Paul shows that from a love of self, man moves to oust all rivals to his love. His rebellion spreads from the home to society generally until it reaches the throne of God, 2-4. *Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God* is the description of many today.

4. Attitudes that are the opposite to that which is required of God are manifested . See what is loved -- self, pleasure, other people's property. See what is hated --



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that which ought to be naturally loved, parents, neighbours, the good.

5. The rebellion becomes a religion . *Having a form of godliness* , verse 5. It is not a formless rebellion but it will seek to replace true religion. It is the rebellion of Cain and of the Tower of Babel revived. This is what is said of the antichrist in II Thessalonians 2: 4. *Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God* . Such then is the trend that will develop in the last days under the influence of the devil who is also called Satan -- the adversary, the opposer of good and God.

II. THIS END-TIME REBELLION WILL INVOLVE A COMPLETE RESTRUCTURING OF MANKIND

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision , Psalm 2:1-4. This is an ancient prophecy of the defiance of authority of which we have been speaking. Notice what it says.

1. Here is the sea-like upheaval among the nations of which we have spoken . The word rage means tumult or commotion. There is that which is stirring up the people of the earth in a most unusual fashion.

2. It involves a uniting of all ranks against the Lord , verse 2. This is not just a commotion amongst the common populace but this involves governments and parliaments. Men have found a cause that unites them, as did Herod and Pilate, Luke 23:12.

3. They are united in their rejection of the restraints that God has placed upon mankind , verse 3. The meaning of the word break is seen in Judges 16:9 where Samson is said to break off from his arms the restraints that Delilah had placed upon him as *a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire* . The term cast away refers to a very violent hurling from you. Thus God's Ten Commandments will be hurled aside as something hated and despised in this rebellion. Do we not see this now? Is not former legislation based upon the Law of God being overthrown? The laws on murder, sodomy, abortion, Sabbath-trading, blasphemy, to name but a few, are examples of this overthrowing.

4. The rebellion shall end with mankind being brought into open conflict with God . *Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure* , verse 5. The return of Christ is essentially His response to the wicked defiance of men to His authority. There are many portions of God's word which speak of this final confrontation. I would urge you to consider the following Scriptures: Joel 3:1-2, 9-16; Zech 12 & 14; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-8; Jude 14-15; Revelation 19:11-21.

III. WE ARE WARNED OF THIS UNIVERSAL DEFIANCE OF AUTHORITY IN ORDER THAT WE MAY NOT BE CAUGHT UP IN IT

Its small beginnings, its form and its dreadful conclusion are all set down in great detail in



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various parts of Scripture for us to study, in order that we *might turn away* , II Timothy 3:5. The words *turn away* mean to *shun, avoid* . *And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues* , Revelation 18:4.

What a panic has ensued of late over the remote possibility of contracting CJD from diseased cattle! If only folk would see the very real danger they are in from the increasing rebellion against God that is flooding the nation and react, as they have done to the very much smaller danger posed by BSE in beef, it would be well for their souls.

Let me state in conclusion that you can be part of this rebellion and this defiance of authority and still attend the house of God. As Judas was a rebel and enemy of Christ, yet a member of the apostolic band, even so many will retain their links with the gospel and the people of God, yet within their hearts there will be the spirit of rebellion. Was there ever a nation that went to war with another that did not have its agents working in the enemy territory? The agent spoke as a native and lived such a life as to convince all who met him that he was a loyal patriot. Yet all the time he served his master who was waging war on the people amongst whom he lived.

You are part of this growing defiance of God if you have never believed on Christ from your heart. If there has never been a definite time in which you have kneeled before the Lord Jesus and repented of your sin and called upon Him to save you, you are yet in your sin. Christ is not your Lord and your God, you are no loyal follower of His but rather a rebel against Him.

If this is so, then though you may long disguise your true character, the day of exposure is coming. You may die undetected as an enemy but eternity will see your discovery. Hear the words of Christ and tremble.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity , Matthew 7:21-23.