

THE DECLINE OF GOD'S LAWS

Signs of the last days in the world and in the church

by Ray Borlase

We have recently witnessed the riots which took place in a number of our major cities carried out by lawless elements in our society. While much has been written about the reasons for this violence and looting, we perhaps have to ask a more fundamental question: what is lawlessness and what can we expect in the future?

The dictionary would define 'lawless' as where "law is non-existent or inoperative; disobedient to or uncontrolled by law." Hence 'lawlessness' is that attitude or state of mind where one is uncontrolled by law. Biblically, 'lawlessness' is a little different for when Paul talks about lawlessness, he would be referring to the attitude where the law of God is ignored or disobeyed. Although in his letters he would use the

Greek word *anomia* (from *a* [without] *nomos* [law]), he would clearly have in mind the Hebrew word for law - *torah*. It has the idea of instruction rather than the criminal code. *Torah* is God's instruction. Biblically, therefore, lawlessness does not necessarily infer violence, robbery or criminality. It is instruction, given originally to Israel, so that, as God said, "it may "be well with you . . . in the land" (Deuteronomy 5:33). Their national well being was dependent upon obedience to God's instruction.

A Tutor or Schoolmaster

The Apostle Paul makes clear that another purpose of the law is that it shows us where we have gone wrong and that we need a Saviour. "The law has become our

tutor to lead us to Christ.” (Galatians 3:24) One of the problems with the way the Church often presents the gospel today is that it tries to avoid mentioning sin, speaking only of the love of God. What we forget is that “sin is lawlessness”. (1 John 3:4) Sin is not extremes of bad behaviour. It is just ignoring God’s instruction and going our own way. There is however a penalty for sin – death, both physical and spiritual separation from God. Therefore, we cannot ignore the ‘tutor’ which points us to the only solution: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” (1 Timothy 1:15)

A Lawless Church

Much of the Church is lawless! Many would consider that an outrageous statement to make, but unfortunately it is true. We do not live by the instruction of God! We water down the gospel and our moral standards to comply more with the world’s values than God’s. Homosexuality is just one area where much of the Church ignores God’s Word. Also, we exercise no discipline when people ‘live in sin’ or commit adultery. In fact, we seem to make allowances for ourselves saying “we are not under law but grace.” We even quote that scripture with no reference to the context where it is basically saying the law could not help us overcome sin because of our sinful nature, nor could we be saved by keeping the law, as we have all sinned. We can only be saved by the grace of God through faith.

Paul makes another statement which is rarely if ever quoted: “Do we nullify the law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the law.” (Romans 3:31) Unfortunately, the same old

tendency is in the Church today as in Jude’s day: we “turn the grace of our God into licentiousness.” (See Jude 4.) We imply that we can go on sinning and living as we please and God will forgive us. Yet under the New Covenant God said, “I will put My laws upon their heart and on their mind I write them (Jeremiah adds: “and I will be their God and they shall be my people.”), He then says and their sins and their lawless deeds (*anomia*) I will remember no more.” (See Hebrews 10:16,17 & Jeremiah 31:33) Clearly, part of being a New Covenant people is not only that our sins are forgiven, but God gives the motivation to obey His instruction; His law is written on our hearts and minds.

The Mystery of Lawlessness

Paul makes mention of this in his second letter to the Thessalonians. He talks about the man of lawlessness coming prior to the return of Christ and says that the mystery of lawlessness is already at work in the world. What he is implying is there is almost a hidden force or attitude at work that completely ignores God’s Word and His ways. Eventually, this attitude is going to be seen in one person – the lawless one – inspired of course by Satan. It will be Satan’s last desperate fling to gain world dominion for himself. However, the coming of Jesus will remove the dominion from this usurper.

It is not only in 2 Thessalonians that we see this, for Daniel understood these matters too. In Chapter 7, he speaks of one who will “make alterations in times and law (*torah*). It is worth noting that recently in Australia they have spoken about replacing BC with BCE (before the common era) and CE (common era) instead of AD. However,

Daniel is told, regarding this person that “his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever” and instead the kingdom will be given to “the saints of the Highest One; His Kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.”

In so many ways, the world is already preparing for the coming of the lawless one. The mystery of lawlessness is at work. Jesus warned, “Because lawlessness (AV has ‘iniquity’, but the Greek word is *anomia*) is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.” (Matthew 24:12,13) Jesus was speaking of those events that would precede His return. All of this fits in together. The lawless one could not possibly gain any following if the world was heeding God’s instruction. The mystery of lawlessness (*anomia*) is working through society preparing the way for the lawless one (*ho anomos*) to take over. It will be hard for Christians to go against the tide, and some will give up!

A Lawless World

Clearly the world will follow the beast (antichrist, the lawless one) and already it is being seen in the development of One World Government and a multifaith agenda. Unquestionably the United Nations is being used to further these ends. It has pushed a homosexual agenda. It has stated that all religions are of equal value. It is increasingly seen as governing the nations.

At the time of writing, it is uncertain what decisions the United Nations will make in connection with Palestinian statehood. It could easily go on to say, at some later stage, that Israel must withdraw from all

so-called ‘occupied territory’, including East Jerusalem. But who gave the United Nations the right of law making?

I still find it amazing that the war against Iraq was judged either to be legal or illegal, by some, as to whether there was a second UN resolution. Yet, we have only to look at the UN resolutions regarding Israel. All the Arab and Muslim nations gang up on Israel and formulate a resolution against her. Yet, in spite of continuing provocation from Gaza, having withdrawn from that territory, no resolution is ever drawn up on Israel’s behalf. It would never be accepted! The Arabs would oppose it every time. How can international law be based on the bias and bigotry of a block of nations?

The decisions regarding Israel are not only unjust they are lawless! God made an everlasting covenant with Abraham (and later with Isaac and Jacob) to give the land of Canaan to Abraham’s descendants (excluding Ishmael and Esau). (See Genesis 17.) It is interesting that the League of Nations actually decided in 1922 to allocate virtually that same territory to be a homeland for the Jewish people. That was the territory which the Israelites occupied when they came out of Egypt. If we include the West Bank and Gaza plus what we regard as Israel proper, then their territory today is identical with the land occupied by the 12 tribes when they came out of Egypt, and the territory agreed by the League of Nations. God has given them the land again and again!

Israel isn’t being lawless; the Palestinians, the United Nations and America, with their resolutions and talk about pre 1967 borders, are the lawless ones. They have ignored

the *Torah* of God. Much of the Church, in that sense, is lawless in that it overlooks God's everlasting Covenant with Abraham, yet rightly embraces the eternal New Covenant. God is a covenant keeping God, so the covenant with Abraham stands, and, thank God, so does the New Covenant with its eternal guarantees.

In these last days we need to take all the more note of God's Word. Only in that way will we be saved from the lawless generation which is arising and the man of lawlessness. Let us watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation to go with the crowd.