

# AS IN THE DAYS OF NOAH

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Reprinted from the *Philadelphia Trumpet*, February 2007

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**Today's moral battles reveal that the larger war has already been lost.  
Our rampant immorality is as Jesus Christ said it would be.**

Listening to political commentators any time after a conservative is elected into office, one might assume that the United States was in the midst of a great spiritual revival. According to the skewed findings of one poll in 2004, Americans supposedly based their vote on “moral values” more than any other single issue, including terrorism, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the economy. *Americans have had enough. Moral values now matter.*

As is often the case, the mainstream media couldn't have been more wrong. As we informed our readers in December 2004, “In truth, our moral values have been in sharp decline for decades. ... No Republican victory will ever resurrect our nationwide moral collapse.”

One right-wing commentator once insisted that America was still a morally conservative nation, no matter the gains liberals enjoyed at the ballot boxes. How did he arrive at that conclusion? By pointing to controversial referendums also voted on in times past, like homosexual marriage. America is morally conservative, he said, because 56 percent of Coloradans voted to ban homosexual marriage in November 2006.

Fifty-six percent? We're morally “conservative” because only 44 percent of citizens in Colorado want to *legalize* homosexual marriage?

Imagine George Washington stepping into a voting booth in 1792 and reading “Legalize Same-Sex Marriage” on his ballot. Or “Legalize Marijuana.” Or “Parental Notification”—should doctors notify parents before performing an abortion on a 12-year-old?

That these items are *even being voted on* illustrates how steep our moral slide has been the past few generations.

## Premarital Sex Now “Normal”

In December 2006, a new study revealed that 95 percent of Americans have had sex prior to marriage. Based on his findings, the author of the study argued against government-sponsored abstinence-only programs, saying that we should focus instead on teaching young people to be “safe once they become sexually active—which nearly everyone eventually will.”

In other words, why bother with teaching God's laws if everyone fornicates before marriage?

When called upon to defend the Bush administration's abstinence policies, Wade Horn of the Department of Health and Human Services said the purpose was to “help young people delay the onset of sexual activity.” But was it to discourage premarital

sex among adults? “Absolutely not,” he said. “The Bush administration does not believe the government should be regulating or stigmatizing the behavior of adults.”

Fine—the government cannot regulate human conduct. Churches do that, right?

Wrong. Church leaders today know well that if they were to preach God's view on morality, they would lose congregants. As Jay Tolson wrote in *u.S. News & World Report*, “While most evangelicals would like to see Christian morality as the ruling ethos of the nation, they also believe Americans should be free to live the way they choose” (Dec. 8, 2003). The title of a *uSA Today* article says it all: “Americans define faith *their way*” (Sept. 12, 2006; emphasis mine throughout).

Tolson quoted one preacher from North Carolina saying, “The bottom line is that evangelicals subscribe to personal faith as paramount. ... You can't shove religion down people's throats.” This is why, Tolson explained, “evangelicals put so much money and energy into extensive *social-service* ministries, and why so many evangelical pastors strive to create ‘*seeker-friendly*’ mega-churches with nontraditional, multimedia services that *reassure* and *entertain* as much as they edify.”

And to think, these social-service ministries with a *come as you are, stay as you are* gospel have those on the secular left downright terrified. Forget about radical Islam. Run from the Christian fundamentalists!

## Know Jesus?

Another pastor quoted in Tolson's article admitted that abortion and homosexuality were “minor concerns” at his church. “The bell we beat is that we must know Jesus.”

*Know Jesus?* You mean the same Jesus who called upon sinners to *repent*? The same Jesus who admonished the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well to “call thy husband,” knowing full well that she was living with a man out of wedlock? “Ye worship ye know not what,” He told the woman after she claimed to be religious (John 4:22). *That Jesus?*

What about the Jesus who confronted the woman caught in the act of adultery? *I don't condemn you*, He said, before adding, “Go, and sin no more” (John 8:11). She wasn't lost. But she was living in sin—and Jesus Christ told her to stop. *Shame on Him for “shoving His religion down her throat.”*

Jesus said to even *look* upon a woman in lust is adultery (Matthew 5:28). And adultery is something we must repent of—or else.

Or else what? *New Testament* theology says that adulterers and fornicators will not inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). It most certainly does not say *define your religious views your way*. It does not say, *We want to reassure you that we're fine with premarital sex. Just come join us for some good old-fashioned entertainment this Sunday*.

God's Word says, point blank, that adulterers and fornicators will not inherit the Kingdom of God—period.

Now put yourself in the congregation at Corinth. You're sitting there before services in the spring of a.d. 55 and find out that your pastor wrote a lengthy letter that will be read as the sermon for the day. *Fantastic!* you think to yourself. *We get to hear from God's apostle today*.

And then—*BAM!* Paul rebukes the entire congregation for allowing fornication in the church (1 Corinthians 5:1). He then publicly excommunicates the known offender and asks the brethren pointedly, *Don't you know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?* (verse 6). *This is Christianity 101*, he says. *If we begin to tolerate such blatant disregard for God's laws in our midst, then that rebellious, define-faith-your-own-way attitude will infect the whole congregation*. Paul instructs, *Cast out the offender and don't even communicate with him* (verse 9).

He then asks, *Don't you know that adulterers and fornicators will not inherit the Kingdom of God?* This is fundamental, in other words.

It's also deadly serious! Why aren't theologians today willing to risk personal gain for the sake of telling their congregants the truth? That's how Paul ministered. Right after his conversion, while in Damascus, antagonists plotted to kill him, prompting a few of his supporters to lower him from a window in a basket to facilitate his escape to Jerusalem. After he arrived there, his disputing with the Grecians triggered another murderous plot. Paul fled again to Caesarea and then Tarsus.

During his evangelistic tours, Paul was expelled from Antioch, Iconium and Berea; stoned and left for dead at Lystra; mobbed at Thessalonica and Ephesus; beaten with rods and jailed in Philippi; arrested in Corinth and Jerusalem; jailed in Caesarea; shipwrecked in Malta; and then jailed twice in Rome, his second go-round ending in his beheading. *That's just what we glean from the book of Acts*. In 2 Corinthians, Paul tells us the Jews whipped him with 39 stripes on five separate occasions. Three times he was beaten with rods.

Now imagine this same Paul, whose body was visibly marred by the multiple beatings, stonings and whippings, starting a megachurch where Christians were free to live the way *they* chose. Imagine this same servant of God, who "knew Jesus," saying that abortion, homosexuality, adultery and fornication were of "minor concern." Entertainment and building up people's self-esteem—*that's what really fills the seats*.

You know it wasn't like that. Paul risked everything—and ultimately sacrificed his own head—in order to preach the word, "to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine," which is what he instructed his most trusted assistant to do. Shortly before his beheading, Paul wrote, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

Because of their own lusts, people simply will not hear the law of God. They want to be told "smooth things" (Isaiah 30:9-10). And preachers today—under the heavy influence of our secularist, anti-God, moral-relativist culture—seem more than happy to oblige them.

As Herbert W. Armstrong asked nearly 40 years ago, "Where does Almighty God pin the guilt for this moral collapse? He pins

it squarely on the world's clergy—the theologians—the priests—the rectors—the ministers—the preachers! They, who ought to be society's moral leaders, have forsaken the Creator God and have become society's followers!" The title of the book that was taken from says it all: *God Speaks Out on the New Morality*.

Just because 95 percent of the people are doing it doesn't mean God considers the conduct lawful.

## Divorce Now "Moral"

Sixty-six percent of Americans view divorce as "morally acceptable," according to Gallup's 2006 Values and Beliefs survey. Not just acceptable—*morally* acceptable.

How would Jesus respond to that poll? "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication [this has to do with illicit sexual activity prior to marriage that was not disclosed to the spouse until after the wedding; fraud, in other words], causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery" (Matthew 5:31-32).

Forget about today: What Christ taught on the subject of divorce was viewed as extreme *in His day*—even among self-righteous Pharisees. *But didn't Moses "command" Israelites to divorce if their marriages didn't work out?* they asked Jesus in Matthew 19. Moses did allow it, He told them, but only "because of the hardness of your hearts." Jesus continued, "But from the beginning it was not so" (verse 8).

Jesus asked them, "Haven't you read ...?" *These are fundamental principles of God's Word! Don't you know? This is basic*.

"Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:4-6). Is your mind capable of analyzing the subject of divorce from *God's* viewpoint? Or do you now see it as "moral" simply because everyone's doing it?

God hates divorce! He hates it because, as *Jesus Himself* said, it not only wrecks families—it destroys nations (Mark 3:24-25). And so God doesn't care if 100 percent of Americans label divorce as morally acceptable. It isn't. And the devastating consequences of divorce prove God is right.

In an issue of *Time*, James Dobson wrote, "Because adults wanted to dissolve difficult marriages with fewer strings attached, reformers made it easier in the late 1960s to dissolve nuclear families. Though there are exceptions, the legacy of no-fault divorce is countless shattered lives within three generations, adversely affecting children's behavior, academic performance and mental and physical health. No-fault divorce reflected our selfish determination to do what was convenient for adults, and it has been, on balance, a disaster" (Dec. 18, 2006).

*But you have to understand*, people say. *We're way beyond divorce and pre-marital sex. Everybody does those things. Let's get to the real issues, like same-sex marriages, or legalization of mind-altering drugs, or partial-birth abortions*.

Radical leftists want these sins legalized. These are the issues they are most passionate about. And it is *these issues* over which they encounter resistance from the right. *That fact alone* shows how far our standards of morality have dropped! "Conservatives" *have already conceded miles of territory in the morality war*.

One wonders what we'll be voting on 20 years from now, assuming God doesn't intervene before then in order to save our sin-sick society.

## Widespread Acceptance of Homosexuality

Here again, that the debate is about whether or not homosexuals can marry is revealing in itself. Half of Americans have apparently drawn the line in the sand and would favor a constitutional amendment to ban homosexual marriage. But the other half, about 47 percent, actually opposes a constitutional ban. It's that statistic that illustrates our *overwhelming* acceptance of homosexual *behavior*. Unnatural, unlawful sexual behavior is not controversial—it's homosexuals *marrying* that has us divided.

President Bush responded to the 2003 Massachusetts Supreme Court ruling allowing homosexual marriage by saying marriage was a "sacred institution" and that he was committed to "do what is legally necessary to defend the sanctity of marriage." Never mind what fornication, sexually transmitted diseases, out-of-wedlock births, abortions on demand, adultery, no-fault divorce, feminist-driven role reversals, dead-beat dads and working moms have done to the sanctity of marriage. As far as "conservatives" are concerned, the *real* threat to this sacred union is homosexuals. As Donald Sensing asked in a *Wall Street Journal* editorial, "If society has abandoned regulating heterosexual conduct of men and women, what right does it have to regulate homosexual conduct ...?" (March 15, 2004). As Sensing correctly noted, those now defending the sacredness of the marriage union are a little late. "The walls of traditional marriage were breached 40 years ago; what we are witnessing now is the storming of the last bastion," he wrote. Traditionalists, he said, "need to get a clue about what has really been going on and face the fact that same-sex marriage, if it comes about, will not *cause* the degeneration of the institution of marriage; it is the *result* of it."

Our society, as Isaiah prophesied, is heavy-laden with sin. The whole head is sick, he wrote. "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (Isaiah 1:6). We have provoked our God to anger! And *Jesus* too.

Does it shock you when I say that if Jesus Christ was in charge of our nation, he wouldn't just ban same-sex marriage, He would *outlaw homosexuality*? If so, then it reveals how far your thinking is from God's and how much of Satan's propaganda your mind has absorbed!

Even going back to the foundation of our nation, as Mark Levin wrote in *Men in Black*, "[S]odomy was a criminal offense under the common law and was prohibited by the original 13 states when they ratified the Bill of Rights." Why, do you suppose, would our nation's Founders establish laws prohibiting homosexuality? Where would they have gotten such a strict standard of morality? The New Testament—that's where! (See Romans 1:26-27.)

Nevertheless, homosexual activists point to the "equal protection" and "due process" clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment as grounds for enjoying the same rights as heterosexuals. The problem with that argument is that when the Fourteenth Amendment was ratified in 1868, as Levin brings out, 32 out of 37 states had laws *against* sodomy. Even as late as 1961, every state in America criminalized sodomy.

But with the emergence of the homosexual rights movement, about half the states had abolished sodomy laws by the early 1980s. Even still, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld one state's sodomy law in 1986. But when called upon to uphold a Texas law against sodomy in 2003, the Supreme Court buckled under pressure from activists in a 6-3 ruling. According to the majority opinion, "The State cannot demean their existence or control their destiny by making their private sexual conduct a crime. Their right to liberty under the Due Process Clause gives them the full right to engage in their conduct without intervention of the government."

In his dissent, Justice Scalia noted that if states had no right to criminalize homosexual conduct, then "what justification could there possibly be for denying the benefits of marriage to homosexual couples"?

That was in June 2003. In November that same year, a Massachusetts court decision favoring homosexual marriage made headlines across America. Yet it was the Supreme Court—not Massachusetts, as Levin notes in his book—that "set the stage for *imposing* gay marriage on every state under a distorted reading of the Fourteenth Amendment."

But don't worry. There's bound to be an army of hard-core conservatives ready for all-out war in the fight for upholding and preserving the sanctity and sacredness of marriage.

Right?

## Sodom and Gomorrah

The word *sodomy* is derived from a Latin phrase meaning the "sin of Sodom," which is vividly discussed, as most people know, in the biblical book of Genesis. Ancient Sodom, like its neighboring city Gomorrah, was well-known for its widespread practice *and acceptance* of homosexuality. Jude 7 says that besides going after "strange flesh," the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were "giving themselves over to fornication." Ezekiel tells us that Sodom was a prosperous area, with an abundance of idleness. But it was also full of pride and abominations (Ezekiel 16:49-50).

In the Genesis 19 account, the men of Sodom wanted to sodomize two visitors, actually angels, who had come to see if the city should be spared God's wrath. While these two angels remained locked inside the home of Lot, an angry mob outside cried out for the new flesh. Inside the home, the angels proceeded to give Lot and his family clear and precise instructions concerning the future welfare of Sodom and neighboring Gomorrah. "Then the men said to Lot, Have you any one else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or any one you have in the city, bring them out of the place; for we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it" (verses 12-13, Revised Standard Version).

Lot relayed this sobering message to the two young men who were to marry his daughters. Now these were two decent men—heterosexuals who had not taken advantage of Lot's daughters. There had probably been numerous instances where they sat around the table with their future father-in-law decrying the evils and perversions of society. And yet, without realizing it, much of that evil had rubbed off on them! They might have recognized many of the more extreme evils in Sodom, but they had grown accustomed to living there—and actually enjoyed much of it.

*How strong society's pull must have been for these two men, at this most critical hour, to mock God's warning, as it was delivered through His servant Lot.*

Their ridicule even caused a seed of doubt to sprout in Lot's mind. The next morning, even after the constant prodding from the two angels, Lot began to linger, delaying his departure—so much so that the angels seized Lot, his wife, and two daughters by the hands and forcibly led them out of the sinful city! Upon leaving the city, the angels shouted at Lot's family, *Run for your lives! And don't even stop to look back, lest you be consumed as well!*

"Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground" (verses 24-25, rsv). God yanked Lot's family out of the mess and burned everything else to the ground. Even then, Lot's wife couldn't let it go.

One cannot grasp how a loving God could obliterate two whole cities without understanding the truth of the resurrection. As Jesus said, it will be more tolerable for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah when they are resurrected in the day of judgment than it will be for those cities that reject God's warning in this end time (Matthew 10:15). They'll have an opportunity to know God when they are resurrected. In the World Tomorrow, God's laws respecting human behavior will be diligently taught and strictly enforced.

### Corrupting God's Way

In Noah's day, society's evil was just as bad as it was in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, only more widespread. Genesis 6:5 says, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only *evil continually*." As Herbert Armstrong wrote in *Mystery of the Ages*, "Man's thoughts, contemplations and plans were continually on self-centered, lustful and evil objectives."

Later in Genesis 6, God says the Earth was "filled with violence" (verse 11). "This violence," Mr. Armstrong wrote, "had become so universal that God determined to spare humanity from suffering longer in mounting misery and anguish" (ibid.).

In verse 12, God says "all flesh had corrupted *his way*." This has been mankind's legacy: substituting *his way* of thinking and reasoning, *his definition* of right and wrong, for God's way! "There is no fear of God before their eyes," Paul wrote (Romans 3:18). He said the ways of man are destruction and misery—and "the way of peace have they not known" (verses 16-17).

The fruits of man's societies prove God true! "There is *a way* which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12). That has been man's track record in going his own way without fear of God: misery and destruction.

Noah tried to warn the people of his day, but, as Jewish historian Josephus explained, "they did not yield to him"—they "were slaves to their wicked pleasures" (Antiquities i, 3, 1). And so, Mr. Armstrong wrote, "God took away their miserable lives, by the earth-wide Flood, to be resurrected in the next second of their consciousness in the 'Great White Throne' resurrection (Revelation 20:11-12). They will be brought back to life in a time when Christ is ruling the Earth in righteousness, peace and happiness. Satan will be gone. Their minds then will be opened to God's truth, and eternal salvation will be opened to them" (ibid.).

In love, God put that evil society out of its misery, just as He will do with ours, unless we repent.

### As in the Days ...

Do we think we are so superior to these ancient societies that the same God who brought universal destruction by fire and rain cannot cause it to happen again? If you *know* Jesus, you should know the answer to that.

Jesus said, "Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded" (Luke 17:28). They were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building—right up to the day God destroyed their cities (verse 29). "Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (verse 30). In other words, before Jesus Christ returns to this Earth in power and glory, God prophesied that our sophisticated, ultra-modern and anti-God society would revert back to the way it was in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah.

*That has happened.*

The Apostle Peter also issued a grave warning for our present day, drawing on the lesson from Sodom and Gomorrah, saying that God turned them into ashes, "making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly" (2 Peter 2:6).

The epistle of Jude, another New Testament message, speaks of these two cities as suffering the "vengeance of eternal fire." Jude wrote that God set them forth as an example for our day!

In like manner, Jesus reminded us of Noah's day, saying, "And as it was in the days of [Noah], so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that [Noah] entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all" (Luke 17:26-27).

*So shall it be in the days of the Son of man.* Can we grasp what this means? History is repeating itself. We should have learned our lesson after the Flood of Noah's day. We should have learned the lesson from Sodom and Gomorrah. But we didn't—and so universal destruction is coming again.

If you *know Jesus*, you know He said it would get so bad before His Second Coming that, unless God cut the destruction short, there would be no flesh saved alive! (Matthew 24:21-22). And right before that universal destruction, Jesus said it would be just as it was in the days leading up to the Flood—and in the days before Sodom and Gomorrah were reduced to ashes. He said we would be eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building—with *our minds on every imaginable evil*.

And then—suddenly—the end will be upon us (Luke 17:30). Very little time remains. A few years from now, a small minority of humanity will be left alive. "Watch ye therefore, and pray always," Jesus warned in Luke 21:36, "that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."