

BEWARE OF DOGS

by

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Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!

For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Phil. 3:2,3

The term "dog" was used by the Hebrews as a term of reproach or of humility in speaking of one's self. (1 Sam 24:14; 2 Sam. 3:8; 9:8; 16:9; 2 Kings 8:13). Fierce and cruel enemies are poetically styled dogs in Psalm 22:16,20. Jesus called the gentiles dogs when He said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." (Mat 15:26) He said this to the gentile woman who was asking Him to heal her daughter. Under Hebrew law (God's law), dogs were unclean animals. As in Peter's vision, unclean animals were a symbol of the gentiles. (Acts 10)

The "dogs," to which Paul is referring here - dogs which drag and tear - were converted Jews who were teaching that in order to become a Christian one must first become a Jew, and be "mutilated" by means of circumcision. Their method of interpretation required that they demand the circumcision of all true believers. Did not God tell Abraham that the person who was not circumcised "shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant"? The literal interpretation demands this.

Paul definitely believed that God "literally" said this to Abraham. But it was now revealed through Christ that circumcision in the flesh was a symbol of the true circumcision of the heart. He says, "We are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Worshipping God in the Spirit means, among other things, using the spiritual method of interpretation.¹ God is seeking such as will worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

Paul correlates the method of interpretation with worship. The carnal (literal or flesh) method results in vitiated worship. This is because this method cannot make the analogy between the symbol and the substance. Circumcision in the flesh was the symbol. Circumcision of the heart is the substance. Since the Judaizers were carnal, they demanded circumcision of the flesh.

It is idolatry when one can only recognize the symbol and not its substance. That is why God commands that we make no graven image and bow down to it. This same "literal" method of interpretation remains in use by many Christians today. Let us look at some examples.

The people were offended when Jesus said they had to eat His flesh and drink His blood. They were offended because they did not understand that He was speaking figuratively. But He said, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63) He calls their method, the "flesh." The spiritual method of interpretation is true worship. Which method will you buy? That of the flesh results in

interpreting symbols literally. The spiritual method is mature enough to see that literal "cats and dogs" are not falling from the sky when mama said that.

When Jesus said He was the Manna from heaven, did He mean that He was the literal manna or was He speaking figuratively? He meant that the manna was a symbol of Himself. He is the true Manna. He is the substance. The manna in the wilderness was the symbol. Those who worship in the flesh and demand that others do it in order to be true Christians are called "dogs." Babes in Christ can be misled by these that Paul called "dogs."

To interpret a figure of speech or a symbol literally is an indication of immaturity or "souliness." Paul clearly stated that these things in the Old Testament were written to us as examples (Greek, tupos, or types). (1 Cor. 10:1 - 6)

Consider the typology of the Temple. While the Temple literally existed as a physical object, it was but a type (symbol, pattern, model, mold, matrix) of the heavenly or "spiritual" temple. John tells us the archetype of the earthly object is the Lamb, who is the True Temple (Rev. 21:22).² Nevertheless, many Christians today insist that the type must be rebuilt and the archetype (the Lamb) must return to it, in the flesh, and rule from within it. This is despite the fact that the stone temple had to be destroyed in order that the spiritual True Temple could be revealed. (Heb. 8:2;9:8)³ This is nothing else but returning to the weak and beggarly elements of the world. (See Paul's epistles to the Galatians and Hebrews; e.g., Gal. 3:1-3; 4:9; Col. 2:8; Heb. 5:12; II Pet. 3:10)

You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? (GAL 5:7)

The Protestant church ran well from AD 1530 to 1820 (more or less). Since then many evangelicals have returned to the carnal method of worship (i.e. interpretation). Compare current day dispensationalism to The Matthew Henry Commentary. Henry was a Puritan from 1700. But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? (GAL 4:9)

Thus, just as the dogs of old placed their confidence in corporeal objects (such as flesh, tradition, the Temple) and in works, so the literalists of today do essentially the same thing. While by confession these profess salvation by Grace through faith, by action they obviously place their confidence in the weak and beggarly elements of the letter (literalism). By "literalism," we mean, interpreting symbols as substance. Or interpreting metaphors, visions, dreams, and figures of speech literally.

Therefore, just as Christ was veiled in Scripture to the dogs of old (2 Cor. 3:14,15), so His revelation is veiled to the literalists of today. Because of the God-sent delusion in the form of a literalistic hermeneutic, they "missed" His coming in the first century. In an ironic and portent twist of "literalism," these confused contemporary "canines" obstinately deny the perspicuous literal time statements made by Jesus as to the timing and meaning of His return (parousia).

Sometimes Jesus speaks figuratively, and sometimes plainly. He said, "These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to

you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father." (John 16:25) He Then told the disciples that He was leaving the world and going to the Father. They replied, "See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech!" (v.29) Jesus went on to point out that they still did not understand, and that they would be scattered because of it. They had conveniently spiritualized His words.

Likewise, the "literalist" conveniently "spiritualizes" the literal declaration of Jesus that some who were standing there in His presence would not die until His coming.

Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. (Mat 16:28)

they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory...Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things are fulfilled. (Mat. 24:30&34)

Jesus plainly and emphatically - literally - declares His return in the first century. Because of spurious presuppositions concerning the interpretation of symbols, the literalist must maintain that Jesus is literally returning in "this generation," meaning our contemporary generation.

Consider the symbol of "stars" by way of demonstration. Because of his inverted, convoluted literal hermeneutic, the literalist believes that before Jesus returns the stars must literally fall from heaven. (Mat. 24:29; Rev. 6:13) And fall they must. Rather, did.

By definition, symbols are real "literal" objects that represent other real "literal" objects. Ergo, when Jesus tells us that stars will fall, He does not mean that the symbol will fall, but rather what the symbol represents will fall! Genesis 1:14 clearly tells us that God created stars preeminently for "signs" (i.e. symbols), and that these bodies will "rule" or govern the day and night (v, 16,18). It is not surprising, then, to see stars representing the twelve patriarchs of Israel in Joseph's dream (Gen. 37:9,10). Neither is it surprising, therefore, to see Jesus utilizing this same idiom to describe the judgment and fall of apostate, adulterous Israel in A.D. 70 (with the destruction of the stone Temple and the Harlot-City Babylon-Jerusalem), represented by the twelve patriarch-stars of Jacob. The symbol did not fall from heaven , but Old Covenant Israel did.

So, it is the delusional presuppositions, the specious hermeneutic, and the resultant spurious theology that veils the truth from literalists. To them, since the "literal" symbols have not fallen from heaven, then Jesus could not have returned when He declared He literally would - in the first century - while some disciples were still alive.

Hebrews plainly states: "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." (Heb. 12:22) Who had come to the heavenly Jerusalem? Was it not the believers of that day to whom Hebrews was written? The heavenly Jerusalem described by John in Revelation 21 and 22 came to Paul's contemporaries. A "literal" hermeneutic demands this conclusion! Paul's contemporaries had come to Mount Zion! Why are the literalists

(futurists) unable to "see" this? Simple. Dogs are not allowed in Zion. But outside are dogs.
(Rev. 22:15)

We are not saying that those of the carnal interpretation are dogs, unless they demand that their interpretation be accepted in order to be orthodox. This is what the Judaizers of Paul's day demanded. If they say that those who do not believe in the futurist interpretation are heretics, then, and only then, are they dogs, because they do not discern the body of Christ. Dogs are carnal. "For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?" (1 Cor. 3:4)

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