

# The Antichrist Shepherd

by Stella Paterson

This is the age of apostasy! We live in a day when deception is all around us and increasing at an alarming rate. As has been said previously, the nature of deception is "stealth" and is not easily discernable. In what is commonly called "the Church" there is no area left un-touched - deception is everywhere, having turned countless souls away from single-minded devotion to Jesus. This statement speaks volumes: "*The false church has enough truth to deceive the faithful and enough lies to damn its followers.*" (Unknown)

The faithful church-goers see the "falling away (apostasy)" to be the "forsaking of gathering together." (Hebrews 10:25). They think that those who have chosen to follow Jesus, rather than some man, are the defectors from the faith. We must get right to the core of the issue to see what, in reality, has transpired. Like the true Gospel, it is simple but man has complicated it by attempting to understand it with a mind of flesh.

There is that word again! FLESH!! As I wrote in *Calling Forth The Remnant*, every problem within the "Church" has as its source that one thing called "flesh." Flesh is the reason Jesus had to die, but that basic truth has been misconstrued in the mind of fleshly man. That is error at its worst!

***"For many deceivers are gone forth into the world, even they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist."*** (2 John 7)

In recent years we have seen increased interest in what some refer to as "end time prophecy." The question as to who will be "the Antichrist" is uppermost in the minds of many. Numerous names have been attached to this mysterious one who is to come and rule the world in a reign of terror. Tradition has it that this "one" will be "the Antichrist," but it is another one of those things embraced by creatures of flesh who are so easily swayed by what they hear. Such tradition has been handed down from generation to generation and accepted without question. But we must always go back to the only references to "*antichrist*," which are found in 1 and 2 John, and ask God's Spirit to open our eyes to the truth.

The articles "*Who is Antichrist*" and "*The Antichrist Bride*" cover some areas of what the Bible tells us. But there is so much more. As surely as there are "antichrists" in the world, resulting in an "antichrist bride," there are also "antichrist shepherds." With the meaning of the word "antichrist" being "opponent of Messiah," we begin to realize that countless "shepherds" (pastors) among us today are opposing Messiah. These shepherds may be found not only in the institutional church, but in the out-of-church community as well.

Now let's look at what the Bible says about shepherds (pastors).

Jesus makes a strong statement about the "shepherd" that opposes Him, when He says, "*He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathers [Greek: 'leads together'] not with me scatters.*" (Matthew 12:30)

The issue of flocks being "scattered" was addressed by the prophets of old. Here is what Jeremiah said: "*For the pastors are become brutish, and **have not sought the LORD**: therefore they shall not prosper [Hebrew: 'be circumspect/vigilant'], and all **their flocks shall be scattered.**" (Jeremiah 10:21) Later on, Jeremiah also prophesied, "*Woe to the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; You have **scattered** my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited [Hebrew: 'cared for'] them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, says the LORD. "* (Jeremiah 23:1-2)*

There is a price to be paid for scattering the precious sheep of our Lord's fold! What makes a shepherd an opposer of Messiah? Was he ever truly born anew, having received the new heredity that comes when Christ [Messiah] comes to dwell in man's spirit?

### **The disciple**

According to the Greek dictionary, a "disciple" is a "learner" or "pupil." If there is a pupil, there is also a teacher. What are the disciples of an antichrist shepherd learning? And where is this counterfeit shepherd leading "his" sheep? What authority does he have to usurp this place reserved for God's true shepherds?

To be a leader, a person must first learn to follow. And Jesus gave good counsel in that area. He said, "*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And **whosoever does not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.**" (Luke 14:26-27) Complete devotion to Jesus Christ comes solely through death to the self-life. Oswald Chambers gave his students some excellent advice, when he said "*Never consider whether you are of use; but ever consider that you are not your own but His. "* If anyone attempts to accomplish anything "for God" it is futile if it is based in flesh and the knowledge of good and evil.*

Oswald Chambers also said, "*Beware of counterfeiting the love of God by working along the line of natural human sympathy, because that will end in blaspheming the love of God.*" Those are strong words, but if we look at a conversation Jesus had with Peter we will see the vital relationship between "love" and "shepherding." Jesus appeared to His disciples a third time after His resurrection and asked Peter if he loved Him more than did the others. Jesus did not address Him as "Peter" which is the name He had given him when they first

met; He called him "Simon, son of Jonas." Here is Peter's response to Jesus: "Yes, Lord; you know that I love [Greek: 'have affection for'] you. He said to him, Feed my lambs. He said to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, do you love [Greek: 'love'] me? He said to him, Yes, Lord; you know that I love ['have affection for'] you. He said to him, Tend [as a shepherd] my sheep. He said to him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, do you love ['have affection for'] me? Peter was grieved [Greek: 'saddened'] because he said to him the third time, Do you love me? And he said to him, Lord, you know all things; you know that I love ['have affection for'] you. Jesus said to him, Feed my sheep." (John 21:14-17)

Peter was pretty good at making promises to Jesus - usually from his "natural human sympathy." Look at this next passage where Jesus is speaking to His disciples after Judas had betrayed Him: "A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another. Simon Peter said to him, Lord, where are you going? Jesus answered him, Where it is I am going, you cannot follow me now; but you shall follow me afterwards. Peter said to him, Lord, why cannot I follow you now? I will lay down my life for your sake. Jesus answered him, Will you lay down your life for my sake? Truly, truly, I say to you, The cock shall not crow, till you have denied me three times." (John 13:34-38)

Now let's go back to the passage from John 21. After Jesus' repeated questions to Peter about loving Him and feeding and shepherding the sheep, He came back to the question of Peter following Him. "Most assuredly I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and used to walk where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and will carry you where you do not wish. **But this He said, signifying by what death he [Peter] would glorify God.** And when He had spoken this, He said to him, **'Follow Me.'**" (John 21:18-19 EMTV) That was Jesus' way of saying that Peter would follow Him by way of the cross. This time Peter would deny himself rather than denying Jesus, as he had previously. He would be filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and be the first to preach the message of the Cross and see souls come to Jesus. And in Peter's first epistle, he said "For you were like sheep going astray, but you have turned back now to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (1 Peter 2:25 EMTV) Do you think that maybe Peter finally got the message?

### **The good Shepherd**

Here we have Jesus' own words: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. But he that is a hireling [Greek: 'wage earner'], and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees: and the wolf catches [Greek #726] them, and scatters the sheep. The [wage earner] flees, because he is a [wage earner], and

*cares not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.*" (John 10:11-14) The Greek word for "catches" is also used as "pluck" in this next verse: *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck [Greek #726] them out of my hand."* (John 10:27-28)

If a shepherd is following the true Shepherd, he will have been born anew by God's Spirit and Love will be dwelling in him. This follower of the true Shepherd will from the "store" of Love "feed" and "tend" the sheep as Jesus had challenged Peter to do. If a shepherd fits the description as found in Jeremiah, he has no Love and cares only for himself.

Jesus, the great example, has a true shepherd's heart and His sheep are precious to Him. We see this in Mark's record of Jesus' life and the gospel. *"And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things."* (Mark 6:34) As I said in my book, *"The true fold is the Shepherd's fold. Jesus is the true Shepherd, but He became a Lamb and gave His life so that His fold might be full. The names of those in His fold can be found in the Lamb's Book of Life."*

### **The self-centered shepherd**

Countless "shepherds" all around us see "their church" as the "only place to be" and those of "their flock" must live according to the dictates of the counterfeit shepherds. If they fail to "measure up" to the standards set up by the antichrist shepherd, they will become outcasts who are shunned by the "faithful" followers of that same "shepherd." What of the antichrist shepherds who fail to follow the true Shepherd by way of the Cross? A. W. Tozer had this to say: *"A clergyman is a man - and often he has a proud little kingdom of his own, a kingdom of position and often of pride and sometimes with power. Clergymen must wrestle with the spiritual implications of the crucified life just like everyone else, and to be thoroughgoing men of God and spiritual examples to the flock of God, they must die daily to the allurements of their own little kingdoms of position and prestige. "* (*Who Put Jesus on the Cross?* by A.W. Tozer)

A quote from another of Tozer's books shows us the priority of too many in this day. What would Tozer say of the present-day state of the "church" if he penned these words decades ago? *"The crowds-at-any-price mania has taken a firm grip on American Christianity and is the motivating power back of a shockingly high percentage of all religious activity. Men and churches compete for the attention of the paying multitudes who are brought in by means of any currently popular gadget or gimmick ostensibly to have their souls saved, but, if the truth were told, often for reasons not so praiseworthy as this...."* (*The Size of the Soul* by A. W. Tozer)

Many people today are looking for a great revival but what we have is a "revival" of religious flesh. My friend Helen wrote to me in an email, "*We Canadians love our comfort and we love to pamper the flesh, we adorn it, we flaunt it, we covet the place of showing it off; we constantly vie for attention, and unfortunately when our lives should be hid with Christ in God, we hide Christ in us and show off self.*"

### **God's warning to the antichrist shepherd**

God does not mince words when it comes to game-playing by counterfeit shepherds. Ezekiel prophesied of such with these forceful words: "*And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus says the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe to the shepherds of Israel that do **feed themselves!** should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat, and **clothe yourselves with the wool, you kill them that are fed: but you feed not the flock.** The diseased you have not strengthened, neither have you healed the sick, neither have you bound up the broken, neither have you brought again those that were driven away, **neither have you sought those that were lost; but with force and with cruelty have you ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd:** and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered.*" (Ezekiel 34:1-5)

**But God has given us Jesus!** Following the above warning, Ezekiel speaks this promise from the LORD God: "*I will seek those that were lost, and bring again those that were driven away, and will bind up the broken, and will strengthen the sick:*" and he followed that with this: "*but I will destroy the fat [Hebrew: 'rich'] and the strong [Hebrew: 'hard']; I will feed [Hebrew: also 'shepherd'] them with judgment.*" (Ezekiel 34:16)

One day very soon, untold horror will suddenly dawn upon the hearts of those antichrist disciples who have followed the antichrist shepherds; all the while looking for "the Antichrist" whose mark they fear taking. In reality, they already bear the mark of the antichrist spirit - they have been deceived, and will be defenseless as the final scheme of things unfolds. The ultimate manifestation of creatures of flesh, the Beast of Revelation, will have them for his own. He will ruthlessly devour and destroy them - just as the antichrist shepherds have devoured and scattered the sheep of their "own folds."

Psalm 37 gives great comfort and is something to keep before our eyes as a reminder of the place to which we must run - that "place" is in the Lord, the Great Shepherd. David the Psalmist knew the Lord as his Shepherd. (Psalm 23)

*"A Psalm of David. Fret not yourself because of evildoers, neither be envious against them that work unrighteousness. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. **Trust in the LORD,** and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed. **Delight yourself also in the***

**LORD**; and he shall give you the desires of your heart. **Commit your way unto the LORD**; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall make your righteousness to go forth as the light, and your judgment as the noonday. **Rest in the LORD**, and wait patiently for him: fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not yourself, it tends only to evil-doing. **For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.** For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: you shall diligently consider his place, and he shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. **The wicked plots against the just**, and gnashes upon him with his teeth. **The Lord shall laugh at him: for he sees that his day is coming.** The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, to slay such as be in the way: their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. Better is little that the righteous has than the abundance of many wicked. **For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholds the righteous.** The LORD knows the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever. They shall not be ashamed in the time of evil: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; in smoke shall they consume away. The wicked borrows, and pays not again: but the righteous deals graciously, and gives. For such as are blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that are cursed of him shall be cut off. A man's goings are established of the LORD; and he delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholds him with his hand. I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread. All the day long he deals graciously, and lends; and his seed is blessed. Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore. For the LORD loves justice [Hebrew: 'including a particular right, or privilege'], and forsakes not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever. The mouth of the righteous talks of wisdom, and his tongue speaks judgment [Hebrew: 'justice']. The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to slay him. The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged. Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt you to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, you shall see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green tree in its native soil. But one passed by, and, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the latter end of that man is peace. As for the transgressors, they shall be destroyed together: the latter end of the wicked shall be cut off. **But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strong hold in the time of trouble. And the LORD helps them, and rescues them: he rescues them from the wicked, and saves them, because they have taken refuge in him.**"