

“Perverted Persons” in the Temple

By Kyle Pope

Deuteronomy 23:17 commanded the Israelites: **“There shall be no [ritual] harlot of the daughters of Israel, or a perverted one of the sons of Israel.”** (NKJV). The word translated “perverted one” in this text is the Hebrew word *qedesh* (קֹדֶשׁ) meaning “temple-prostitute (man)” (BDB, p. 873). The old King James and American Standard versions translated this term “sodomite” because of the fact that *qedeshim* (in the plural) were usually ones “practicing sodomy and prostitution in religious rituals” (footnote from NKJV).

In much of the ancient world homosexual temple prostitution was quite common. Most in ancient Canaan saw it as something good. When God revealed the prohibition above to Moses he was condemning something that the world of Moses’ day would have seen as an act of religious piety. Ironically, this very word comes from the root *qdsh* (קֹדֶשׁ) which means “separated, or holy” (BDB, p. 871). Such a person was (as their world saw it) a “sacred person, temple prostitute” (Koehler & Baumgartner 1958 ed. p. 826). It is God who told the Israelites that this was instead, an abomination (see Deuteronomy 23:18).

In spite of this prohibition, the Israelites on a number of occasions allowed this very practice to occur. When Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, reigned the Bible tells us: **“And there were also perverted persons (*qedeshim*) in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.”** (I Kings 14:24). In fact, the Israelites even corrupted their own religious practices to allow this practice in their false wor-

ship. This is evident from what the Bible tells us about the reforms of Josiah, whom it says: **“...tore down the [ritual] booths of the perverted persons (*qedeshim*) that [were] in the house of the LORD...”** (II Kings 23:7). As difficult as it is to even consider, God’s chosen people had come to the point that they committed homosexual acts with male prostitutes in the temple itself and imagined that it was righteous!

In August of 2003, the Episcopal Church denomination appointed their first openly practicing homosexual as a bishop. The Episcopal church, long ago abandoned any pretense of following and respecting Biblical authority. In their teachings and practice they in no way resemble the Lord’s church that is described in the New Testament. Even so, they continue to appeal to the name of Jesus and call themselves “Christians.”¹ As I heard an Episcopalian bishop, who stood in front of a building called “St. Paul’s Church,”² defend this appointment by saying it is only people’s “interpretation” that the Bible condemns homosexuality, I was reminded of the Israelites. Our world may not yet have come to the point that the Israelites did, but with events such as this occurring and “religious” leaders twisting and ignoring Scripture to defend it, I wonder, how long will it be before our world does come to that point?

¹ “Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” - II Timothy 2:19.

² Paul’s teachings on homosexuality - Romans 1:26,27; I Corinthians 6:9,10 & I Timothy 1:8-11.