

The Last Days
Part 3
“The Apostasy”

1 Timothy 4:1-5 “But the Spirit clearly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and teachings of demons through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, their conscience having been seared; forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from foods, which God created for partaking with thanksgiving by Christians that know the truth. Because every creature of God is good, and nothing to be put away when received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified through the word of God and prayer.”

We note that Paul refers to the *latter times*. Let’s remember that the latter times began with the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ back to heaven. So the latter times is that period of time between the ascension of Christ back to heaven and His return to earth at the 2nd coming.

Paul tells us that the Spirit of God clearly communicated to him about what is coming. *The Spirit speaks expressly* which means “explicitly,” “clearly”—in no uncertain terms this is what’s coming!

The first thing the Spirit testified to him is that there would be a departure from the faith on the part of professing Christians.

We call this *APOSTASY*. There will be an apostasy from the genuine faith that is in Jesus Christ.

Now, this is not the same thing as what we call *backsliding*. Backsliding is when a believer falls into some kind of sin and needs to be restored. It is a failure in their testimony and personal walk with Christ, resulting in living in a way dishonoring to the Lord.

But for the backslider there is a road open to restoration by true repentance and confession. God says in Hosea 14:4, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely."

Paul wrote to the Galatians 6:1: "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted."

On the other hand, apostasy is far more serious. The apostate is a person who rejects and abandons his profession of faith in Christ. My personal conviction is that an apostate was never really a true believer, but only presented themselves as a Christian.

Apostates are those who are familiar with the teachings of Christ, who may have even practiced many of Christ's ethical and moral teachings. They may have grown up in church and

been very involved in church functions, even to the point of teaching a Sunday School class or serving in some other leadership capacity.

But they were never born again!

Paul the Apostle describes them as "having a form of godliness but denying its power."

He then adds, "Have nothing to do with such people" (2 Tim. 3:5).

They appear to be Christian, to be genuinely religious, but they've never genuinely repented and turned to Christ.

Jesus said regarding the time of His return, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord, 'will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles? '23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' (Matt. 7:21-23)

So before Jesus comes again, there are going to be people running around speaking in His name, feigning miracles in His

name, and acting like true Christians, but the truth is they will never have personally known Him!

How does apostasy happen? Well, when you haven't truly been born again there is no real attachment to Christ. Thus, when false teachers come along teaching demonic doctrines, an apostate easily walks away from the Christian faith to pursue a false god. There's no inner conviction from the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit isn't in them. Paul said, "If any man has not the Spirit of God he doesn't belong to God" (Ro. 8:9).

Paul said that apostasy would be a mark of the last days.

In 2 Thes. 2:1-5, he warns of the same thing:

"Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, 2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. 3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."*

The phrase “falling away” here is from the Greek word *apostasia*. So again, Paul, by the Spirit, is predicting a last days apostasy, a walking away from the teachings and gospel of Jesus Christ on a large scale.

Jesus predicted the same thing!

When He was asked by His disciples, What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world (Mt 24:3), Jesus’s first words were *apostasy*.

He warned of religious deception four times and specified what it would involve:

“Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” (Mt 24:4-5, 11, 24)

Now, I would contend we’re seeing the Bible’s predictions of last days apostasy taking place before our eyes. For instance, one well known minister on a national talk show said to the startled host:

“It’s not necessary to be born-again. You have your way to God; I have mine. I found eternal peace in a Shinto shrine... I’ve been to Shinto shrines, and God is everywhere.”

The host, who was not a Christian, was so shocked that he actually came to the defense of Christianity. “But you’re a Christian minister,” he retorted, “and you’re suppose to tell me that Christ is the way and the truth and the life, aren’t you?”

The minister replied, “Christ is one of the ways. God is everywhere.”

On another popular national talk show, yet another very famous American pastor, when asked if a person had to believe in Christ to be saved, responded, “I don’t know. I’m real careful to say who or who won’t be saved.” He then went on to say that people in pagan religions also love God.

Huh? Jesus said, “No one gets to the Father but through me!”

Sadly, things like this can be found taking place more and more as world wide apostasy unfolds in these last days!

Another popular trend today is interfaith worship services. I'm not talking about inter-denominational—but interfaith, where the emphasis is on all faiths coming together as if one was as good as another!

Some Christian leaders are inviting Muslims, Jews, Hindus, American Indian practitioners of “native religion,” and others to join in worshipping “the one true god, regardless of the name you may give to him or HER.”

Jude writes of this in his one chapter epistle:

“When these men join you at the love feasts of the church, they are evil smears among you, laughing and carrying on...they are like clouds blowing over dry land without giving rain, promising much, but producing nothing. They are like fruit trees without any fruit at picking time. They are not only dead, but doubly dead, for they have been pulled out, roots and all, to be burned” (Jude 1:12).

Paul instructed the Corinthian church, “Don't be teamed up with those who do not love the Lord, for what do the people of God have in common with the people of sin? How can light live with darkness?” (2 Cor. 6:14)

He then quoted Isaiah the Prophet, “That is why the Lord has said, “Leave them; separate yourselves from them; don't touch

their filthy things, and I will welcome you 18 and be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters.” (Vs 17)

But the modern day apostates of the church are more concerned with gaining the world’s favor than God’s blessing!

Now, in closing we note in our original text that Paul describes some of the things the apostate teachers will teach:

They will be “giving heed to deceiving spirits and teachings of demons through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, their conscience having been seared...”

And under demonic inspiration, they will “forbid people to marry and command Christians to abstain from foods, which God created for partaking with thanksgiving by Christians that know the truth.”

Now, the Holy Spirit’s prediction came to pass not long afterward when a group of heretics called the Encratites and Marcionites, and afterward the Manicheans, began to teach that marriage was the invention of an evil god. They also frowned on eating meat.

Then later, as the Catholic Church formed, the doctrine of celibacy for the priests was mandated. They were straight up forbidden to marry, just as Paul predicted.

The take away for us in our day is that false teachers, inspired by demons, always teach things that directly contradict the Word of God.

The Apostle Peter put it bluntly, reading from the Living Bible, he wrote:

“there are people who are deliberately stupid, and always demand some unusual interpretation (of Scripture)—they have twisted (it) around to mean something quite different from what God intended—and the result is disaster for them.” (2 Pet. 3:16)

Dear church, this is happening in so many places today. False teaching, twisted Scripture, things passing for the moving of the Holy Spirit that can be found nowhere in the Bible.

We live in a time when we must know our Bibles better than any book in the world. We must learn to hold Scripture up against what we’re hearing taught in Jesus’s name!

So in closing, what does God's word say to those who truly love Jesus, cherish His shed blood, cleave to His Word, and anxiously await His return?

Jesus said in Matt 12: "Be ready! Be fully dressed and have your lights shining. 36 Be like servants who are waiting for their master to come home from a wedding party. The master comes and knocks, and the servants immediately open the door for him. 37 When their master sees that they are ready and waiting for him, it will be a great day for those servants" (Matt. 12:35-37).

