

Apostasy in the New Testament

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[0:00] It's good to be with you all this evening.

! This will be our very last lesson, I promise, from my standpoint, on the study that we have! been involved in now for thirteen sessions on the book of Jude.

Since we're concluding our study in the book of Jude, you might want to turn in your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 4, because that's where we're going to be at, and not in Jude.

I wanted to make some remarks, initially my plans were to make some remarks concerning apostasy, that's what we've been studying, from other writers of the New Testament, and then I began to focus in on the Apostle Paul, and I really don't have time to mention Peter and John and James and all the others.

They all had to deal with this. The study tonight is actually extra credit. We finished Jude last week, but if you're trying at the last minute to raise your grade from a B to an A, this is the time to do it.

[1:28] Jude was masterful in describing the problem with apostasy. Jude, in verses 3 and 4 of that great book, he warned us of false teachers who were present in the church.

It says they crept in unnoticed. This is how apostates work. They want to blend in. They want to go unnoticed by true believers.

In that way, they can do the maximum damage to the flock of God, and especially to those in the church who have not yet made a commitment to the Lord, who are still considering the truths of the gospel.

Once these apostates were on the inside of the church, their goal was to turn the grace of God into lewdness.

And let me say this, when someone tampers with the grace of God, it doesn't get any more serious than that.

[2:41] Might as well be tampering with the holiness of God. That's very serious things. Once inside, the apostates go about their business denying the Lord God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, as good as Jude was to issue these warnings, he was not alone among the New Testament writers. The apostle Paul was deeply concerned concerning false teachers and apostates in the church.

He had to deal with them and actually do battle with such throughout his earthly ministry. Paul made reference to the problem of apostasy and the false teachers throughout his work.

But the greatest expression from Paul on this subject is 1 Timothy chapter 4, verses 1 to 5. Let me read those. Now, the Spirit expressly says that in later times, some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God in prayer.

[4:24] The earth is a battleground between God and Satan. I think it was Dr. Tozer. Stan, you would know, wrote a book on, this isn't a playground from Dr. Tozer.

This isn't a playground, it's a battleground. It's a battleground between God and Satan. This war has been going on since creation, and actually since before creation.

God has given mankind His word and asked men and women to respond to it. Satan tries to counter that by luring men to follow lies.

And there are people out there who claim that the lies told by Satan are actually the truth, and the truth told by God is actually a lie.

We have those people around. We have Bartlesville. I know when I was chief the first time, and actually before then I was in the FBI, there was a house on the way to Lake Hudson that was a place of satanic worship.

[5:27] Not illegal in America, under the First Amendment, but I knew I didn't want to go there and worship. The most intense battleground is inside the church.

And we've seen over the centuries many professing believers turn from God's truth to follow deception. And there were a lot of these guys.

This is going on in the 21st century at an alarming rate. So it's not new. There are many Old Testament examples of men exposed to the truth, but then amazingly turning from it.

One such person, and we could cite dozens, was King Amaziah of Judah. And we read about him in 2 Chronicles, in chapter 25 of 2 Chronicles, verse 2, talking about this king.

He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, yet not with his whole heart. He didn't do it with his whole heart. That's a very sad commentary. He had religion, and it only resulted in external behavior.

[6:48] But his heart was not fixed on God. He didn't know God in his heart. When he died, written on his grave was, Amaziah turned away from following the Lord.

Well, how'd you like that to be your epitaph? He turned away. The New Testament had its share of apostates. The most famous was Judas Iscariot, camped out with the Messiah, Savior, sovereign king of the universe, for three or three and a half years, only to turn and walk away.

There was also Demas. Paul talked about Hymenaeus and Alexander turning away from the faith. Throughout the church age, men and women have turned from the faith and turned to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.

False religion, and the world's full of them. The world is full of them. All false religion is energized by demonic beings who are led by their evil master, Satan.

They are so deceptive, they can even masquerade themselves as angels of light. You can read about that in 2 Corinthians 11, verse 14.

[8:15] It uses that very word there, angels of light. And these demons use humans to carry out their agenda. Anyone who worships an idol is worshiping the demon that is behind the idol.

The Bible says such people are playing the harlot. They sacrifice to demons. That, of course, is an extreme level of depravity.

It's almost unimaginable. It was so bad, many of these people got caught up in Baal worship and other forms of evil religion, satanic religion, that they even sacrifice their sons and daughters to these idols.

Pray you're never in a country at a time when children or the unborn are sacrificed. And I say that to make a profound statement.

We killed 4,400 today in the greatest country on earth, a republic. I heard a term today, though, on Christian radio, and I never really heard this.

[9:32] You hear a lot about aborting the unborn. This one pastor said, don't use that word unborn. They're pre-born. And if we don't abort them, they're going to be born.

If we do, they won't be. They're forever going to be pre. Apostates in the church are able to lead some to fall away from the faith. Many abandon the faith.

Quite honestly, we've been here almost 40 years, 40 years in January. We've seen people in our church fall away. They fall away.

That means to depart from the faith. In Southern Baptist life, 265 people, I think it's a week, join a cult. Southern Baptist wide in the United States.

So, fall away means depart. It is reserved for those who come close to embracing the faith and then fall away. I know we had a lady at one time and she dropped out because she said she got into line dancing and the best time to do it was on a Sunday morning with the group she belonged to and that was better than coming to church.

[10:51] But you can worship God that way. Yeah, I'm sure. I'm sure. I won't identify the person. Diane will know immediately, but a young guy one time, Diane said, have you ever witnessed anybody?

He said, I think I did accidentally one time. Okay. Okay. You remember Jesus, the parable that he used with the soils, the various soils and the seeds and when we talk about apostasy, here the seed, or those that are victims of apostates, the seed is cast on pretty good soil, but just beneath it

is a solid rock base and when the seed germinates and the roots start going down, the seed, the plant starts coming up, the roots hit that solid boulder underneath there and they cannot penetrate that rock.

The plant without the root system dies, of course. That's what these people are. They start out pretty energized, excited even and I've seen people in this church.

I saw a guy in, gosh, this is 30 years ago or more and he was excited for about three weeks and then he said, you know, it's just not for me and out the door. Never saw him again.

people spring up in the church, all seems well, but below is grave danger. Of course, the plants I'm speaking back are really people and they're destined to die.

[12 : 37] An apostate is not someone struggling to believe. It is one who has willfully abandoned the biblical faith they once professed. That's what apostasy is.

They come close to the truth. They probably are indistinguishable from other believers and then all of a sudden they depart. They become rejecters of Christ among the flock of Christ.

Paul then gives six figures or features rather of apostasy in apostates and the first thing he talks about is the predictability of apostasy because he says in that first part of 1 Timothy verse 1, chapter 1, verse 1, but the Spirit explicitly says apostasy should sadden the church.

Apostasy should outrage believers everywhere. It shouldn't shock us. It shouldn't surprise us.

The Lord said it was going to happen and he used the New Testament writers to warn us, even the Old Testament writers, but especially the New, I'd say especially Jude and Paul, Peter.

[13 : 58] The Holy Spirit told us in Scripture this is going to happen. It's very predictable and it's going to happen until the Lord comes back for the church.

And then the Holy Spirit also tells us that the greatest time of apostasy will be in the end just before the Lord's return for His church.

So apostasy is both predictable and inevitable. And then the Lord talks about the chronology of apostasy in 1 Timothy 4, chapter 4, verse 1b.

When we talk about the last times, we are in the last times. But I also want you to know we've been in the last times for a long time.

The last times were kicked off by the incarnation of Christ, the first coming of Jesus Christ. And the end times are going to be over for the church the second time the Lord comes.

[15 : 17] But we're in the last times. John said in one of his epistles, children, this is the last hour. This is the last hour.

Jesus came to this earth. He ushered in the Messianic era. That kicked off the last hour. We've been in the last hour for 2,000 years.

Can you imagine? I mean, today John would come and he would say, Beloved, you're in the last seconds. You're in the last seconds because we're 2,000 years closer to return to Christ.

And of course, 1,000 years is a day to the Lord. A day is 1,000 years. In these last days, Christ has spoken to us. We are in a time also, again predictable, when people's love has grown cold.

That's what happened to the church at Ephesus. It's gone, by the way. They had great doctrine, but their love for the Lord and for one another grew cold.

[16 : 27] Well, what about the source of apostasy? 1 Timothy 4, verse 1, toward the end of that verse, Paul says, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.

That's heady language, isn't it? Paying attention means to devote oneself or to agree, to assent, if you will.

People that are apostates or being led by apostates are listening to deceitful spirits. They are listening to doctrines of demons.

I always remember the cartoon book. We've got a Christian cartoon book and this guy's on his deathbed and he looked like it and the preacher held his Bible and says, well, you renounced the devil and he said, I can't afford to make anyone mad right now.

He was so sick, you know. Well, it's okay to make the devil mad. The word deceitful is where we get a Greek word for the planets.

[17 : 32] Isn't that interesting? You know, Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, the other planets. By the way, I include Pluto. Pluto. No scientist has an excuse to remove Pluto.

I like Pluto. You're saying now that it's come back to be a planet. Well, it's coming strong because that, well, you know what happened. The satellite we launched 20 years ago or whatever, it went by there and photographed.

It's a complex planet and a beautiful one and active. It's got volcanoes and it's got a small atmosphere and, yeah, it's making a comeback. I like Pluto.

So why would Paul use that word that we use for planet? To the ancients, a planet, they could see them in the sky periodically, but they wandered.

They were called wanderers because they didn't, I mean, every night you can go out and you'll see Orion's belt. Now, Orion's belt has shifted probably 100 million miles that day, but it looks the same.

[18:37] It's so far away. We travel something like 66 million miles a day, planet Earth. We're going around ourself, we're going around the sun, the sun's traveling and our galaxy is traveling.

So if you feel tired, you should. We went 66 million miles today. Yeah. But a planet, a planet was a wanderer.

it is used here to refer to men and I'll include women who wander around from their thoughts and from their worship of demons.

They're not fixed. They're not planted in the good soil. And they're not on the foundation which is Christ, Jesus, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

the greatest source of apostasy, of course, are antichrists. Anti is an interesting word that means against.

[19:40] It also means in place of. These are people against Christ and they spring up in place of Christ. And many antichrists have gone out into the world.

John wrote about them in his second epistle, for many deceivers have gone out into the world.

Those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh, such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.

Watch yourselves so that you may not lose what we have worked for but may win a full reward.

Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God.

Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting.

Whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works. By the way, that's 2 John verses 7 to 11. This is pure demonic seduction.

[20:52] And it dates back to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. That's what happened to Adam and Eve. They were seduced by the serpent who was indwelt by Satan.

Indwelt by Satan. Well, what about the purveyors of apostasy? 1 Timothy 4, verse 2.

By means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron. Well, we live in a ranching state.

That's a painful thought, isn't it? Seared in their own minds, in their own conscience with a branding iron. Demonic false teaching teaching is carried out by surrogate human agents.

In the literal Greek language, they are hypocritical or deceitful lie speakers. Interesting term.

They're lie speakers. Demons use human deceivers to speak their lies.

[22:03] And let me say to you, they're everywhere on television. You've got to be careful.

Especially if you've got your grandkids over visiting or your kids. I don't know if any of has young kids anymore. But be careful what you watch.

TV's full of them. They use human deceivers to speak their lies. A lot of these humans are ministers, teachers, authors of theological books, and so forth.

They may wear a mask of religion, but it is ultimately the religion of Satan. The religion of Satan.

Their conscience has been subjected to heat like a branding iron.

And you know, let's face it, if you get burned by a branding iron, you're going to have scars, right?

Scar tissue, in the example that Paul uses, prevents the truth from entering in.

Scar tissue builds up once they have their minds seared with the branding iron of demonic deception concerning truth.

[23:16] This is kind of a difficult passage. Paul talks about the content of apostasy, men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods. kind of a difficult passage.

Anything held that is contrary to Scripture is the entry point for demonic activity. If people are ignoring the Bible or misquoting the Bible, that can be the entry point for demonic activity.

Satan, you know, he's very subtle. He's described as a subtle being. He will try and gain entry into all kinds of circumstances.

Let me give you one, and there's myriad. In our day, pornography is where he gains a significant foothold. There are now one billion porn websites to choose from, I'm told, on the internet.

Now here, the Holy Spirit uses marriage and abstaining from certain foods. There's nothing wrong with singleness.

[24 : 28] We've got some guys in here tonight that are single and just happy as a lark. I'm married and I'm happy as a lark. I thought I better quickly add that because even with glasses off, I can see.

Nothing wrong with singleness. And in individual circumstances, it may even enhance service rendered to God. But there's nothing wrong with marriage and God honors men and women united in holy matrimony.

God honors that. But many taught that self-denial, for instance, remaining single, put one on a higher spiritual level than other people.

And that simply was not true. Food was another matter. Abstaining from certain foods was thought to put one on a higher spiritual level as well.

Now there's a name for all this and we're not going to get into it tonight, but this was Gnosticism. It was the Gnostics. And if you go to the dictionary and look it up, don't start with N, start with G, G-N.

[25 : 46] And they taught that they were on a higher spiritual level. And let me, I want to say this gently, okay? And you know how I am, gentle. There's some charismatic leaders on TV that are Gnostics.

And I mean, I've heard them say, if I say anything that conflicts with the Bible, remember I got the latest information from God. You ignore, I've heard a guy say, you ignore what's in the Bible if I say anything that conflicts.

Because I've been talking to God, He's been visiting with me. He called me up into heaven to be with Him. You know, Paul went up there and he said, I can't talk about it. I can't, man was, I saw things man's not permitted to see.

I've told you one such, you know, he wrote his autobiography two years later and he forgot to include that he'd been called up to heaven. But that was a big deal with him.

But these were the Gnostics. And they thought they possessed this greater knowledge, therefore they were closer to God. Paul deals with that in Colossians, which Lee taught, chapter 2, verse 16 to 23.

[27 : 00] Therefore, let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new boon or a Sabbath.

These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Let no one disqualify you insisting on asceticism and worship of angels going on in detail about visions, popped up without reason by his sensuous mind and not holding fast to the head from whom the whole body nourished and knit together through his joints and ligaments grows with a growth that is from God.

If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do not submit to regulations, do not handle, do not taste, do not touch, referring to things that all perish as they are used.

according to human precepts and teachings, these have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

That's Paul. They don't help. Followers of Christ are complete in him. I've been studying just on my own lately the sufficiency of Christ.

[28 : 25] He's sufficient. And people go around, I mean, there's a big move on in the church today around the world, including America, that God's now speaking to us through dreams.

Well, the writer of Hebrews kind of settled that. In the former days he talked to us through dreams and visions. Today he talks to us through Jesus Christ. He talks to us through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Followers of Christ are complete in him. Nothing need be added to him. Nothing can be added to him. And they certainly do not need to practice physical self-denial to gain salvation from sin and righteousness before God.

That happens at the cross. Well, then we have the error of apostasy. 1 Timothy 4, 3 to 5.

who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received and thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good.

[29 : 35] Nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer. The fundamental error of apostate teaching is that it rejects divine revelation.

all false teaching is a denial of God's word. Paul spent much time confronting such apostles, all of whom were energized by demons and Satan himself.

God created marriage. God created food. He did so to bring joy and praise. these basics were being attacked by the apostates.

They refused to honor God for creating these good things. They refused to recognize that everything created by God was good. The Gnostics even said that spirit is good but the body is evil. And the body, because the evil is going to be destroyed. So if you're a priest or a preacher and you want to go out here and sleep with prostitutes or commit some act with a woman or a man, it's okay because your body is going to die anyway.

[30:51] It's evil. But your spirit is good and it will live on. Well, that's demonic. That's a horrible thought. when they refuse to recognize that everything created by God is good, they're denying the goodness of God in creation.

I think all these guys that are teaching our children and our grandchildren evolution, which is a form of denying the Creator. That's what it is.

When God closed creation week, He declared that everything He made was good. They were sanctified.

We are to pray to God for the good things He has given us that brings joy to our hearts and praise to our lips, to praise Him as Creator.

Now, we know there's a religion out here that has mandatory celibacy. And a lot of them are anything but celibate in this day and age.

[32:06] But the Catholic Church has raised up priests and told them they have to be celibate. And truly, let me just say to you, it's led to a disaster in the 20th and 21st centuries.

just the tip of the iceberg as far as pedophilia and affairs. Even in Luther's day, there were, when he visited Rome, he saw brothels with priests.

They were built for the priesthood. And the priest would go over to this brothel if he wanted to be with a woman, over here if he wanted to be with a man. Luther wrote about that in the 1500s.

Can you imagine? Abstinence from foods was also the teaching of demons. It denies creation by God, robbing him of glory and praise to his name.

Apostasy is an ever-present danger in the church. We must be grounded in the word of God in order to confront such apostates head on.

[33:10] And let me say to you, the writer of Hebrews understood this well. In Hebrews 13:9 he said this, Do not be carried away by various and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were thus occupied were not benefited.

So the writer of Hebrews fully understood that. Well, for 13 lessons now we've given some warnings on apostates and apostasy. They're very real in the church.

They're increasing in the last times. And we must be on guard for ourselves, our families, our church, the young people that are going to be left when we're gone.

We've got to get them well grounded and warned about these guys. Thank you.