

Checkin' Out My Walk  
#28 Laodicea - Unmasking Apostasy

Christ's Proclamation to Laodicea -

Rev. 3:14 "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

Lao = people      Diceans = rulers      =      "rule by the people"

Jesus Christ > Head Of Church      Holy Spirit > is not ministering as the guide.

This Church is neither faithful nor true to God's Word.

Apostasy can be defined as *the departure from the truth that one professed to have.*

The apostate denies these doctrines and has departed from the truth he professes to have.

The old apostasy was marked by verbal 'destructive denials.'

Two New Testament passages clearly Predict An Apostasy in the latter days.

A. II Thess. 2:1-3 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him (*rapture*), we ask you, <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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,

Note: Day of the Lord refers to the Tribulation Period and Christ's 2<sup>nd</sup> coming

Two things will occur before the Tribulation Period will start.

1. The Falling Away > The Apostasy = Greek = apostasia
2. The man of sin, son of perdition = Antichrist will be revealed

B. I Tim. 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

The prophetic Word declares there will be a falling away from the faith.

Three New Testament passages provide a description of the Character Of The Apostasy.

A. I Tim. 4:1-3 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, <sup>2</sup> speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, <sup>3</sup> forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

1. The source of apostasy is demons. Apostates have essentially given in to seducing spirits and are preaching a system of doctrine which is a doctrine of demons. Those who become enamored with *doctrines of demons* end up *giving heed to seducing spirits*.
2. They speak lies through hypocrisy
3. Their conscience has become insensitive.

Consider: Satan has his own system of doctrine > *doctrines of demons*. Such doctrines find no basis in God's Word and are based on teachers' claiming to have received special, divine revelation from God. These revelations must now be accepted as "new truth."

Note: Many will defend these "new truths" based on how happy, good or joyful they FEEL. They assume such good feelings must be of the Lord.

Caution: People are attracted to things that make them feel good and evoke an emotional release. If the feeling can be ascribed to a supernatural work of God, the people are deceived.

Note: Part of this demonic doctrine involves an attack on the believer's liberty characterized by: forbidding to marry and the instructing to refrain from eating meats.

Such legalistic apostasy will increase as church history unfolds throughout the last days.

B. II Tim. 3:1-5 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: <sup>2</sup> For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, <sup>4</sup> traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. From such people turn away! (religious)

C. II Peter 2:1-22 - False Teachers & Destructive Doctrines

Peter's Concerns: (1) False teachers were promoting immoral ungodly living by denying that Christ was really going to return to judge sin.

(2) They sought to lure the churches into their carnal ways.

(3) Focus on Scriptures given by God rather than listening to the "private interpretation" of false teachers who refuse to believe that God will judge wickedness.

22 Attributes of False Teachers - v. 1-19

1. 2:1 They infiltrate the church. Secretly bring in alongside
2. 2:1 They come in secret.
3. 2:1 They deny the work of Jesus.
4. 2:2 They blaspheme the truth.
5. 2:3, 14 They are greedy and selfish.
6. 2:3 They use our words but not our dictionary. They use salvation, inspiration, etc.
7. 2:10 They follow the flesh.
8. 2:10 They are presumptuous and self-willed.
9. 2:10-11 They do not want to be under anyone's authority.
10. 2:12 They exhibit peace on the outside but are like untamed beasts on the inside.
11. 2:12 They speak more evil than good.
12. 2:12 They are ignorant.
13. 2:13 They love to deceive others.
14. 2:14 They are full of adultery. Seductive & Immoral
15. 2:14 They cannot cease from sinning.
16. 2:14 They prey on unstable new believers.
17. 2:15 They intentionally speak lies.
18. 2:15 They are out for monetary gain. Devise clever lies to obtain your money
19. 2:16, 18 They talk a lot but say nothing.
20. 2:17 They make grandiose promises but never deliver.

21. 2:18 They use alluring thoughts to provoke attention from their audience.

22. 2:19 They make promises they cannot deliver.

### 1. Destructive Doctrines - v. 1-3

a. Apostate teachers lure people away from the Word of God and into "deeper experiences" that are contrary to the Word of God.

b. They use deceptive words instead of God's inspired Word.

c. They teach damnable heresies which deny the Person of Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross. This is a matter of life and death! Difference between salvation and condemnation

Warning: Heresy and error will rise up in the church when Christians stray from the pure teachings found in God's Word. See Matt. 24:4-5

### 2. Doom Of False Teachers - v. 4-11

a. Already condemned by God

b. God knows how to rescue godly people from their trials, while keeping the wicked under punishment until the day of final judgment

(1) He lifted Noah & his family up above the judgment - a picture of salvation.

(2) God would not judge Sodom until Lot and his family were removed out of the city.

Belief: God will not send His wrath on this world until He takes His church out > Rapture.

### 3. Depravity of False Teachers - v. 12-17

a. Natural brute beasts - Jude 1:10 > They follow their instincts without regard for consequences and their passions are unrestrained.

(1) Satisfy cravings of the flesh! They cannot cease from sin because they are in bondage.

(2) They are covetous > Desire to exploit people for personal gain. Always Want More!

They disguise their real motives, but eventually their corruption shows like Balaam who could get messages from God but he led people away from God.

Balaam prostituted his gift to base uses to gain honor and wealth.

b. They "beguile unstable souls" - picture of "baiting of the trap."

(1) Offer them "Liberty." > License to sin - Jude 1:4 - This promise is NEVER fulfilled.

(2) Bait the trap > Fulfillment - New "Christianity" fulfills you and helps you find your "true self."

Quote: "There is NO freedom or fulfillment apart from submission to Jesus Christ.

The purpose of life is not to find your freedom, but to find your master."

Truth: When believers don't train themselves in God's ways, they are vulnerable to those who have TRAINED their hearts in covetous practices.

c. Although God seems silent in the face of their wickedness, they will receive the wages of their unrighteousness: eternal darkness. God sees their deeds and He will judge.

d. v. 17 - These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. This illustrates the emptiness of their promises.

Consider: Their promise of freedom is a False Freedom: It is based on false promises which is offered by a "false Christian" and involves a false experience.

What they promise does not matter. Whether they deliver proves the truth of their teaching.

4. Deceptions of False Teachers - 18-22 These false teachers once had knowledge of Christ but had returned to their old lifestyles (became again entangled). Their falling away proves that knowledge of facts is NOT ENOUGH to save anyone. They are worse off than before. It would be better if they had never known the correct way than to know it and then reject it. A dog returns to its vomit. A washed pig returns to the mud. The pig looked better and the dog felt better, but neither one had been changed. They still had the same old nature.  
Truth: The Bible is not tolerant toward apostasy and it castigates it very severely.

### The Apostate's Denial

A. Denial of the Trinity > I John 2:22-23 Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.<sup>23</sup> Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

B. Denial of the Incarnation > I John 4:2-3 By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God,<sup>3</sup> and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

II John 1:7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

C. Denial Of The 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming > II Pet. 3:3-4 knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,<sup>4</sup> and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of creation."

Note: Peter assures us any delay in Christ's return does not show a failure regarding His promises. God is giving humanity time so that all who will should come to repentance. (II Pet. 3:9)

Conclusion: The teachings of apostasy involve the destructive denials of the Person and work of the Messiah, especially with regard to His place in the Trinity, His deity, His incarnation as the God-Man by means of the Virgin Birth, and the fact that He is coming back physically.

The root of these denials is the denial of the inspiration of the Scriptures themselves.

Once a person moves away from the acceptance of the authority of Scripture, there is no longer any safeguard for other crucial doctrines.

### Apostates' Actions or Deeds

Jude 1: 17-19 But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ:<sup>18</sup> how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.

1. Apostates Will Be Mockers - They will mock the fundamentals of the faith. (p. 1)

2. Apostates will create schisms or separations.

Because of their denial of some of the above, they will convince some but not others.

In the course of time, the two factions develop into a split within the church.

Note: The process begun by mockery results in a division of the church.

"The New Phase [Of Apostasy] Claims To Affirm The Fundamentals Of The Faith..."

The old phase was characterized by destructive denials. The new phase claims to affirm the fundamentals of the faith, but they have made a paradigm shift: The Bible is no longer the final authority in determining divine truth, but experience is equally valid.

In actual practice, the experience takes priority over the Scriptures. If the Bible contradicts the practice, then the practice is justified as being "a new move of the Spirit." Therefore, what the Scripture actually says can be contradicted by a new experience. This is a far more "spiritual" way of denying the truth of God and, therefore, far more deceptive.

The old apostasy was marked by *verbal* "destructive denials."

The new apostasy is marked by *practical* "destructive denials." This, in turn, has led to many *strange and divers doctrines*, causing many to be truly *tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine* and resulting in total spiritual instability, as Paul warned would happen in Eph. 4:8-16.

They may affirm the authority and inspiration of Scripture, but it is only their experience that determines the meaning of the text in particular and truth in general.

The new apostasy has produced the same fruit as the old apostasy.

They mock those who will not join the "new wave" and they have caused schisms dividing both churches and families.

Consider: The proper way to determine truth is to go to the Word of God first.

Do not rely on the experiences of other people. Furthermore, the Bible must be the final and only authority on all matters of both faith (what we believe) and practice (actions and experiences, etc.).

Unfortunately, what has happened in recent years is that a new experience or phenomenon breaks out in some part of the church, and then people simply try to find verses to justify the activity rather than be willing to admit that the experience—no matter how wonderful or supernatural it felt—was simply not of God. Most of the proponents defend the practice, not on the basis of Scripture, but on the basis of their own experience.

The most common evidence is that it makes them feel happy and joyful, though this does not take into account that any kind of emotional release of this nature will make one feel better. Even unbelievers can have this same experience.

Furthermore, Satan would not be a very good deceiver if he made one feel badly, would he?

Satan can give people joyful and happy experiences which give him a victory if that—rather than the Word of God—becomes the final authority for determining spiritual truth.

Isaiah 8:16, 19-20: Bind up the testimony, Seal the law among my disciples. And when they say to you, "Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,"

should not a people seek their God? *Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living?*

<sup>20</sup> To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, *it is because there is no light in them.*

One of the motifs of the Book of Isaiah is the contrast between the Remnant (Jews who believe) and the non-Remnant (Jews who do not believe). In verse 16, one crucial difference between the two groups is the place that the Scriptures have in their lives. The law is the Law of Moses, and the testimony is the words of the Prophets. The remnant believed that which Moses and the Prophets declared: that is the foundation of their faith, and this is also their authority. The non-Remnant rejects the Scriptures as the final authority and seeks to make God more "real in their experience" by going toward idolatry and looking at gods and goddesses that they could see, feel, and touch, creating a more visual picture while they worship.

In verse 19, Isaiah issues a warning that they are not to go after counterfeit spirits and teachers *that chirp and that mutter*. Isaiah is warning people not to pursue supernatural things that cause them to make the strange sounds of chirping and muttering, for while these experiences might come from the supernatural, not all that comes out of the supernatural is of God. Indeed, those who go after those *that chirp and that mutter* could well come out with great testimonies of experiencing the supernatural and feeling joyful and great. But Isaiah would not accept any of that as valid testimony. The only valid testimony: *To the law and to the testimony!* Back to the Scriptures > the only final authority. The closing phrase should not be missed: *if they speak not according to this word, surely there is no light in them.*

Acts emphasizes: Paul, Silas and the others always made their final authority the Word of God and not their own experiences.

Acts 17:1-3: Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. <sup>2</sup> Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ."

Paul did not usually use his personal experiences as a tool for evangelizing. The Scriptures were the final authority. Those who came to believe (v. 4) did not do so because of any signs and wonders they saw Paul perform, but rather because of how he expounded the written Scriptures and showed how Jesus fulfilled the necessary Scriptures. The two times Paul gives his personal testimony of salvation is used as part of his defense when he is on trial. Many can give a powerful testimony of how their lives have changed. The final authority and criterion has to be the written Word of God for one's claims or beliefs.

Acts 18:28 for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

Acts 28:23-24: So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at *his* lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening.

<sup>24</sup> And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved.

The refutation of the unbelievers was not based upon signs and wonders, but on Scripture.

### The Focus Was On The Trustworthy Prophetic Scriptures And Not On Experience

II Peter 1:16-21: For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

<sup>17</sup> For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." <sup>18</sup> And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. <sup>19</sup> And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; <sup>20</sup> knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, <sup>21</sup> for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

As convincing as the Transfiguration experience might have been to Peter, he points out that a far more authoritative base for believing that Jesus was the Messiah (and that this was not *cunningly devised fables*) is the Scriptures > Pay Attention To What The Prophets Wrote. Their words are like a lamp shining in a dark place. Because the written Word of God is the product of the Holy Spirit, that is, indeed, the *word of prophecy made more sure*.

The response of some is: Isn't the manifestation of the supernatural the evidence that this is a work of God, even if it is not found in Scripture? Are not signs and wonders the evidence of the work of God, even if the specific signs and wonders are not found in Scripture?

The answer is a decisive "no."

Matt. 7:22-23 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' <sup>23</sup> And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

Notice what these false teachers were able to do in the name of a counterfeit Jesus!

They used the name of Jesus.

Consider: The frequent use of Jesus' name deceived so many.

They were able to do three specific things: *prophecy* events which did come to pass; *cast out demons*; and do *many mighty works*, such as miracles of healing and other signs and wonders. Yet, *in that day*, Jesus will say to them: *I never knew you*.

The new wave of apostasy: The name of Jesus is heavily used in almost ritual-*mantra* style, claim all kinds of signs and wonders are occurring. By themselves these things do not prove anything

because Satan can duplicate these. Get back to the written Word of God: the final criterion & source of authority, and the final foundation for all matters of faith and practice.

Paul's Admonition to Church at Corinth:

I Cor. 4:6 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.

Warning: If any manifestation or phenomenon goes beyond what is written in God's Word, it must be rejected as not of God.

II Cor. 11:3-4; 13-15 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or *if* you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it! For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup> And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. <sup>15</sup> Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

Paul emphasizes: Believers of the Corinthian Church can also be deceived by Satan and his ministers. Remember: Church had a strong tendency to be involved in the sensational & the experiential and signs and wonders which opened it up for deception by false teachers. Paul labels 3 things by the word *another* (v. 4): *another Jesus, another gospel, another spirit*. The Greek, however, has two different words here, both of which mean "another," but they carry a slightly different shade of meaning.

1. The *first* term means "another of the same kind"
2. The *second* term means "another of a different kind"

Rendering verse 4 a bit more literally from the Greek, it would read as follows:

*For if he that comes preaches another Jesus of the same kind, whom we did not preach, or if ye receive another spirit of a different kind, which ye did not receive, or another gospel of a different kind, which ye did not accept, ye do well to avoid him.*

Paul is saying the gospel being presented is another gospel of a "different kind.

The source is another spirit of a "different kind."

However, the Jesus being presented is another Jesus of the "same kind."

NOTE: The name being used to foster the work of deception is the name of Jesus that sounds like and seems like the Jesus of the New Testament. It must be a carefully disguised counterfeit so those who do not judge by the Word of God are very easily deceived.

Note: To carry out the work of deception, they must certainly focus on the name of Jesus.

The mere usage of the name "Jesus," even in the context of words like "praise," "glory," etc., does not authenticate anyone's ministry. The final authority must be the Scriptures and not experience, signs and wonders, unusual activities, or strange noises.



A Different Spirit: Spiritual deception is accomplished primarily through the working of counterfeit miracles. The Apostle Paul warned in:

II Thess. 2:9 The coming [of the lawless one, the antichrist] is through the activity and working of Satan and will be attended by great power and with all sorts of [pretended] miracles and signs *and* delusive marvels— [all of them] lying wonders—

Paul identifies three areas of potential spiritual deception:

1. Power

2. Signs

3. Lying Wonders

Counterfeit Power — Acts 8:9-11 But there was a man named Simon, who had formerly practiced sorcery in the city to the utter amazement of the Samaritan nation, claiming that he himself was an extraordinary *and* distinguished person.<sup>10</sup> They all paid earnest attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is that exhibition of the power of God which is called great (intense). And they were attentive *and* made much of him, because for a long time he had amazed *and* bewildered *and* dazzled them with his skill in magic arts.

Counterfeit Signs — Exodus chapters 7-8 detail the works of the Egyptian magicians who were able to mimic the first 4 miracles God worked by the hand of Moses before Pharaoh whose heart grew hard against God because of these signs produced by his magicians.

Counterfeit Wonders — What is a "wonder?" It comes from the Greek word *teras*, which means "an exceptional event" or "omen." It is used only 16 times in the New Testament, 13 times speaking of the Works of God. If "power, signs, and wonders" can be produced by both God and Satan, how can we know which are of God?

I John 4:1-4 "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

Spiritual discernment requires testing. The authentic Holy Spirit will never contradict the Scriptures. Never use our "natural mind" to discern the activity of the Spirit.

The truly spiritual "judge all things" to determine what is truly from God.

What can we do in this age of deception?

II Timothy 4:2-5 "Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."