

# Contending For The Faith

March 11, 2020 Lesson #9 Predicted Apostasy: The Falling Away  
Effects Of False Teaching

Wiersbe: The purpose of Bible prophecy is not for us to make a calendar, but to build character.

Prophecy is designed to enlighten, comfort, and encourage, but one of the primary purposes should be to motivate us to godly living—living with a view to eternity and the marvelous things to come. Paul emphasized this fact in both of his Thessalonian letters.

Jesus warned us not to set dates for His coming [Matt. 24:36, 42].

Date-setters usually cause problems. That is what happened in the Thessalonian assembly.

The Bible indicates there will be a great apostasy during the end times. [II Thess. 2:3]

- Different translations refer to it as: the falling away; the rebellion
- Apostasy is a rebellion, an abandonment of the truth.

Terms to Understand:

Day Of Christ = Coming of Christ for His Church; Rapture [I Cor. 1:7-9; Phil. 1:10; 2:16]

Day of the Lord = The Day of Judgment that climaxes with His 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming to earth to set up His Kingdom [God's wrath during the 7 year tribulation period]

Day of God = When God's people enjoy the new heaven and new earth when all evil has been judged. [II Pet. 3:12; I Cor. 15:28]

Paul's writings provide strong clues why the end church will be weak, vacillating.

Paul wrote II Thessalonians [51-52 AD] to correct some of the errors concerning the end times that the believers had heard from false teachers.

## The Character of The Church At Thessalonica BEFORE False Teaching

I Thess. 1:2-10 We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; <sup>3</sup> constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, <sup>4</sup> knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; <sup>5</sup> for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. <sup>6</sup> You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, <sup>7</sup> so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. <sup>8</sup> For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. <sup>9</sup> For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, <sup>10</sup> and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

## The Character Of This Church AFTER False Teaching

The Falling Away, Apostasy, in the latter days.

II Thess. 2:1-3 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ AND our gathering together to Him (rapture), THAT ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand [had come.] Let No Man Deceive You by any means; for that Day [The Tribulation] will not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition...

### The False Teaching

#### A. Source of False Teaching

1. The cause of the disturbance was evidently made on the basis of 3 distinct sources.
  - a. The false teaching could have come through a "different spirit."
    - Refers to the claim of some to a prophetic utterance made in the power of the Spirit of God. There were evidently those in the church with the gift of prophecy, but the church and the leaders were to carefully examine and accept **ONLY** what was from God. Was it in keeping with both the OT and what they heard from Paul the apostle?
  - b. The false teaching could have come through a word [statement, speech]
    - Distinguished from the claim to be a spirit of prophecy or divine revelation
  - c. It was further enhanced by a letter claiming to come from Paul.

False teachers had presented a fake letter as if it were from Paul that claimed:

- Christ had already come and had already gathered out the church to Himself.
  - We missed the rapture [II Thess. 2:3]
- This would have been especially troubling because Paul had encouraged them in I Thess. [~50 AD] that they would be raptured **BEFORE** the day of wrath came upon the earth.
- The false report indicated the world was now living in the judgments of the "Day of the Lord." Their present persecutions confirmed this false report.

#### B. The Nature of the Claims

1. The precise nature of the disturbance is seen in the words, "to the effect that the day of the Lord is already here (or *present*)." Literally, the Greek text says, "as that the day of the Lord is present."

- Paul is not denying the imminency of the day of the Lord, but its presence.

The Thessalonians believers were being told the day of the Lord had arrived and was present.

2. It is clear from the first epistle, the apostle had taught these believers about the nature of the day of the Lord [I Thess. 5:2].

- They knew that in its beginning phase, it would be a time of the wrath of God poured out on the world, but they also undoubtedly knew it would be a time of intense persecution for tribulation saints.
- Thus, in view of the intensity of their persecution, someone was attempting to convince them that they were then in the intense portion of the day of the Lord.

- Their suffering had already been so severe that someone tried to convince them that the period was already in progress, even though the Lord had not yet come to gather them to heaven.
- They had been led to believe, however, that his coming for them would spare them the anguish of that hour [I Thess. 5:9]. But people were now telling them, with Paul's apparent backing, that such a deliverance was not to be.
- Therefore they were in great need of an authentic word from Paul assuring them that they had understood him correctly in his first epistle.

### C. Effect of False Teaching > *THE SHAKEN CONDITION*

II Thess. 2:2a be not soon [easily] shaken in mind, or be troubled; quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed

1. Easily = quickly, hastily, soon

- The idea is ultimately that of "easily" in the sense of too quickly without due thought and study. [not being a Berean]
- They needed to carefully reflect on the teaching Paul had given them.

Consider: From the winds and currents of false doctrine: The unsettled condition that occurred among the believers in Thessalonica was the result of failing to remember and reflect on what they had been taught.

II Thess. 2:5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

- This should have protected their minds from such instability.

II Thess. 2:15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast [Do not move away from the TRUTH of the Gospel], and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

2. "SHAKEN" = saleuo, "to agitate, shake, unsettle, cause to waver." It was used of moving away from something, like a ship suddenly torn away from her moorings by strong winds and waves. may suggest a sudden shaking or move followed by a condition that continued.
3. "From your Composure" is literally, "from your mind; understanding."
4. "And be disturbed," point us to the abiding results of what happened because they had been shaken in their understanding of God's truth.
  - "Disturbed" is throeo, "to be inwardly disturbed, aroused, frightened."

Note: Through the study of God's Word, Christians are to KNOW and become ANCHORED in the Truth. The goal is to become transformed by that truth through the renewing of their minds [Rom. 12:1-2], not shaken from that truth and thus in a state of worry or disturbance by the many turbulent waves and winds of false doctrine promoted by the false teaching of men [Eph. 4:14].

*Problem: Seeds Of False Doctrine Had Been Sown*

A. The false teaching that they were THEN in the Day of the Lord [Tribulation Period] was undermining the meaning and significance of the coming of the Lord for the body of Christ.

- Discouraged by persecution and needed incentive to persevere
- Deceived by false teachers who confused them about the Lord's return

Paul writes to his beloved flock who were instantly shaken by the false teaching and continued to be deeply troubled.

- The Day of the Lord is a time of worldwide judgment. [Isa. 13:6; Obad. 1:15]
- They were NOT in the Day of the Lord because THAT DAY could not arrive until certain other events had taken place.

1. Apostasy, Rebellion or falling away must come first

Apostasia does not mean merely disbelieving but rather an aggressive and positive revolt.

- It refers to a special departure and rebellion against the true God.
- It will become a worldwide movement and will provide the seed bed for the great system of revolt which will be headed up in the person of the Beast who will be the very personification of Satan himself.

Consider: The removal of the true believers at "our gathering together unto Him" makes the apostasy in the professing church 100%.

2. Revealing of the man of lawlessness [son of perdition]

- Antichrist would not be revealed until the restrainer is taken out of the way

II Thess. 2:6-7 And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. <sup>7</sup> For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so until he is taken out of the way.*

- Out of the way = out of the midst = #3319 mesos = in the midst of

Consider: The Holy Spirit is in the "midst" of God's program today, working through the church to accomplish God's purposes. When the church is raptured, the Holy Spirit will not be taken "out of the world;" otherwise nobody could be saved during the Tribulation.

- He will be taken "out of the midst" to allow Satan and his forces to go to work.
- The Holy Spirit will be present on the earth during the Tribulation but He will not be restraining the forces of evil as He is today.
- When the believers leave the earth in the rapture, all who remain will experience God's wrath during the Tribulation.

Calm down and REMEMBER the TRUTH I taught you in my first letter.

I Thess. 4:13-18 The Lord would return and catch up His own to meet Him in the air.

- ❖ This is the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ AND our gathering together unto Him.

Note: The coming of the Lord and our gathering is a SINGLE subject. The coming of the Lord includes our gathering together to Him. The Greek has one article with both nouns.

Paul had promised them deliverance from The Tribulation. [I Thess. 1:10; 5:9]

I Thess. 5:9-10 For God has not destined [appointed] us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>10</sup> who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. <sup>11</sup> Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

Salvation = Strong's 4991 = *sótéria* = deliverance; preservation; *salvation*, i.e. God's rescue which delivers believers out of destruction *and into* His safety

- His coming for the body of Christ was the event that would keep them out of THAT DAY.

The False Teaching indicated:

- They would first have to undergo the severe persecution of The Tribulation and possibly even suffer martyrdom before Christ's coming, according to these false teachings.
- They were even told that their current suffering indicated the arrival of the expected tribulation.

The apostle Paul, in concern for the Thessalonian believers who were trying to stand firm in their faith under pressure from false teachers, taught the Thessalonians in this letter:

- ❖ Their hope in Christ's future return should serve as an encouragement to them in their suffering, motivating them to live responsibly for Him.

Paul writes concerning the details of this great departure from the faith. [62-64 AD]

I Tim. 4:1-3 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving [seducing] spirits and doctrines of demons. Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

- The prophetic Word of God declares there will be a falling away from The Faith.
- SOURCE of apostasy is DEMONS.
- Seducing or Deceiving Spirits: The most defining word to describe the entire operation of Satan & his demons is DECEPTION.
- Apostates have essentially given in to seducing spirits and are preaching a system of doctrine which is a doctrine of demons.
- Doctrines of Demons: This is not teaching about demons.  
It is false teaching that originates from Demons.
  - To sit under such teaching is to hear lies from the demonic realm.
- Satan & his demons constantly work the deceptions that corrupt & pervert God's Word.
- Influence of Satan and his demons will reach its peak during the Tribulation Period.

Consider: Satan has his own system of doctrine > *Doctrine Of Demons*.

- Such doctrines find no basis in God's Word.
- They 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. Paul describes in graphic detail how society will fall apart in the end times. He provides the basic reason: People will be holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power. II Tim. 3:5 There will be no lack of religion, but people will deny the true power that is able to transform society for the good, producing peace, righteousness and justice.

I Tim. 6:3-5 If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; <sup>4</sup> He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, <sup>5</sup> Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

- Itching Ears: Professing Christians, nominal believers will follow their own desires and flock to preachers who offer them what they want to hear.
  - Their goal: Men who preach according to their own desires.
  - People dictate what is being preached and taught!

Anything that is taught as a “man-pleaser” or to tickle the ears, must be considered apostasy for anything taken away from or added to the Gospel makes it another gospel entirely and one that is altogether different and isn't really a gospel at all.

Paul seeing the great crisis coming, is in fear.

False teachers with Damnable heresies: An apostate teacher or preacher is disguised “as an angel of light” meaning they look like they're teaching the gospel but they're really apostates and what they teach is actually apostasy or the doctrine of demons.

I Tim. 6:20-21 O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge”— <sup>21</sup> which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith.

Paul Writes Concerning Details Of The Perilous Times. [~67 AD]

II Tim. 3:1-5 This know also, that in the last days Perilous Times shall come.

<sup>2</sup> For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

<sup>4</sup> Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

<sup>5</sup> Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

Perilous Times = chalepos = used only 2x in the NT; here and in Matt. 8

1. Jesus and His disciples had sailed across the Sea of Galilee. A windstorm had risen and swamped their sailboat until Jesus spoke and calmed the waters.

Matt. 8:27-28 But the men marveled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him! <sup>28</sup> And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gadaranes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.

2. Exceeding fierce = chalepos was used in this phrase

- And fierce they were ... so strong that in this territory of the beach and its cliffs, no one could pass. Their strength came from demonic possession.

When Paul wrote those prophetic words to Timothy, his exhaustive description of latter-day humanity was constructed around the idea of madness ... raging insanity empowered by dark forces! The days before Christ's return would be marked by a growing social insanity.

It would be an insanity driven by the same dark forces encountered by Jesus and His disciples on the shores of Galilee on that day so long ago.

Note social changes and developments that were driven by raging insanity of the sort that suggested the presence of dark forces, working behind the scenes to destroy our society:

Eph. 6:12 "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

II Tim. 3:5 Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

There will be no lack of religion, but people will deny the true power that is able to transform society for the good, producing peace, righteousness & justice.

Clearly, the Bible predicts a last-days signs and wonders movement-but it will be of Satan, thus a delusion that will deceive many. We must not forget how prone we always are to "signs-and- wonders" deceptions.

II Tim. 3:6-7 For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, <sup>7</sup> always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

- Their converts: Women were especially susceptible to this kind of experience since they had a low status in society.
- People who fall for this false system: Burdened with guilt and looking for some escape from bondage and fear. Cannot control their various desires
- Always searching for truth, trying this approach and that, yet they are never able to be satisfied.
- False teachers take advantage of problems people have and promise them quick and easy solutions. They "worm their way in" and soon control people's lives.
- It isn't long before the false teachers grab their followers' loyalty, money and service.
- All of this is done in the name of religion. **TURN AWAY**

After Paul's solemn warning, He makes this remarkable statement:

II Tim. 3:8-9 Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; <sup>9</sup> but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.

Jannes and Jambres, magicians in Pharaoh's court who, through the power of Satan, duplicated (up to a point) the miracles God did through Moses and Aaron.

Paul thus declares the last days opposition to the truth will not come so much from outside the church but from those within who are reprobate [counterfeit; do not pass the test] concerning the faith, depraved men who corrupt the truth.

They deceive and lead many astray by performing apparent miracles in Christ's name but which (when more than mere trickery) are actually of Satan. They lead others into false doctrine and thus a false hope within the church.

Verse 9 promises these counterfeits will eventually be exposed.

### Paul Says People Are Unwilling To Endure Sound Doctrine

II Tim. 4:3-4 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; <sup>4</sup> And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

- Not Endure: holding up under adversity; can be translated "tolerate."
- Paul warns Timothy: In the dangerous seasons of this age, many people would become intolerant of the confrontive, demanding preaching of God's Word.

[II Tim. 1:13-14; I Tim. 1:9-10]

Counterfeits, in the real world, are only successful in so far as they, as closely as possible, imitate the real. Only very close scrutiny will show that that \$100 bill is not legal tender. In the real world, if a warning went forth that there were counterfeiters at large, wouldn't we scrutinize our money with great diligence? Yet, there are "spiritual counterfeits" at large and so many are gullibly accepting what they teach at face value.

There are false teachers in the world today who claim to know God's will because of their dreams, their study of astrology or their special "spiritual" gifts and revelations.

Jude and Peter say they have invaded the churches and are among us. Whatever ANYONE says who claims to be speaking for the Lord must be tested by the Word of God.

Isa. 8:20 To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

Acts 17:11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. They did not use the fluctuating criteria of their emotions and experiences in their testing. They used the only one reliable trustworthy, infallible standard > Word of God.

Satan's greatest weapon is man's ignorance of God's Word.

There is so much more at stake - our spiritual lives hang in the balance.

Adrian Rogers: It is better to speak the TRUTH that HURTS and then HEALS than FALSEHOOD that COMFORTS and then KILLS.