

# Back to Bible Basics

Issue 1

## APOSTASY - AN EVER PRESENT DANGER

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It was only about ten years after Paul and Barnabas established the Galatian churches that they had turned away from the grace of Christ to another gospel. (Galatians 1:6). Man's memory is short, and apostasy is an ever present threat to the church. In fact the first Century Christians were told by inspiration that the beloved church of our Lord would fall away (2 Thessalonians 2:1-10; Acts 20:28-30; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 4:1-5). Let us notice some admonitions from God's word as to why this would happen.

**UNFAITHFUL LEADERS** *"Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."* (Acts 20:30-31). Paul is speaking here to the Ephesian elders. A church is only as strong as its leaders (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-11). Once leaders begin speaking error, the church will very soon fall into apostasy.

**FALSE TEACHERS** Even the first Century had false teachers. Judaisers, for example, were gaining influence (Acts 15:1; Galatians 2:4; 5:1-5). We also see how two men, Hymenaeus and Philetus, were teaching that the resurrection had taken place (2 Timothy 2:15-19). Their false doctrine was spreading like gangrene (v17). The church

was also troubled by those who taught that Christ was not incarnate (1 John 4:1-6). The "elect lady" who John wrote to was admonished not even to invite them into her house nor bid them Godspeed. (2 John 7-11). Paul said: *"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."* (Romans 16:17-18).

**WORLDLY PRESSURES** *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God"* (Romans 12:2). We must never underestimate the pressure that the world exerts on our minds. Israel rejected God's leadership and wanted a king like the nations (1 Samuel 8:4-5). Christ's entire prayer for his disciples on the eve of his betrayal was centred on His desire for them to be kept from the influence of the world (John 17).

**DISSATISFACTION WITH GOD'S WAY** *"Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, we will not walk therein."* (Jeremiah 6:16-17). The gospel was fully revealed by inspiration in the first century (Ephesians 3:1-5; 2 Peter 1:3; Jude 3, 2 Timothy 3:16-17). Therefore we must leave it unchanged (1 Corinthians 4:6; Galatians 1:8-9, Revelation 21:18-19). *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."* (Isaiah 55:8-9)

**LACK OF KNOWLEDGE** *"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee ..."* (Hosea 4:6). The Holy Spirit reveals nothing to us directly. His

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job is to reveal Christ's will through teaching (John 14:26; 6:45). God does not reveal His will through subjective feelings, or through any means of revelation apart from the Scriptures (Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 14:12). He has chosen that men be converted through preaching (1 Corinthians 1:21), and after conversion to study his word in order to be approved (2 Timothy 2:15; Matthew 28:20).

**COMPLACENCY** Apostasy does not come suddenly but is introduced, little by little. I once heard of how native servants in Africa steal items from a mantelpiece. They gradually move the item a little bit each day till it suddenly disappears unnoticed. Satan works like this in the church. For example, he could not introduce the instrument into worship overnight so he does it gradually by introducing humming in the background first. The same thing applies to such things as the "faith only" doctrine. Satan won't immediately start advocating it, but will spend many years exposing the church to subtle ridicule

for not accepting denominational people into fellowship, and then gradually introduce phrases such as "Do you think God would condemn such loving people to hell?" or "How can we be so arrogant to think that we have all the truth?". The fact is – good, religious people can be lost (Matthew 7:21-22; Romans 10:2-3) and the truth can and must be known (John 8:24). May God's people be ever diligent and keep the church of the Lord pure by loving it and defending it.

Complacency of Christians is taught by Christ in the Parable of the tares. *"But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way."* (Matthew 13:25). Tares are the deceptive weeds which Satan sows in God's field. By the time the tares had been noticed, they were too deep rooted. Satan had done his work while men slept. *"Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."* (Ephesians 5:14). 

## DO YOU KNOW WHY...?

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The inspired apostle Peter wrote *"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defence to everyone who asks you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear"* (1 Peter 3:15). Every child of God needs to be prepared to give a Scriptural defence of his faith. When someone asks you "What must I do to be saved?" are you able to provide a chapter and verse to back up your response to this question?

What if someone asks you why the church meets on the first day of the week? Would you say, "I don't think it really matters if we gather together to worship God as a congregation on the first day of the week."? Or would you respond, "Well, I know that it is important for the church to meet together on Sunday to worship God, but I can't tell you why."? Neither response is acceptable. New Testament Christians should be able to direct the questioner to the approved examples found in Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 16:1,2 to show that the church of the Bible met for

corporate worship on the first day of the week. Furthermore, it should be pointed out that the first day of the week has special meaning to the Christian. It was the day the Lord resurrected from the grave (Mark 16:1-6). It was also on that day that the church was established (Acts 2:1-47). The church was established on the day of Pentecost which fell on the fiftieth day following the Passover. This was a first day of the week.

What if someone asked you what you believed about the use of alcohol, your views on marriage, divorce and remarriage, or demanded an explanation for the absence of the mechanical instrument of music in the worship services? Would you know where to turn in your Bible to answer these questions?

It is the objective of this little paper to explore, not only the fundamental questions posed in this article, but many others that relate to the worship, structure, entrance requirements and purpose of the church. We will be considering those elements that make the Lord's church unique. We will strive to offer up a reasonable and Scriptural reason for the stand we take on key issues relating to the church. 