

# **Our Present Apostasy**

*By Ron Boatwright*

Apostasy means, "falling away". Apostasy is caused by those who "want to pervert the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:7). The church in the first century was warned, "there will be false teachers among you who secretly bring in destructive heresies" (2 Peter 2:1). There is an apostasy that is now occurring in many congregations of the churches of Christ. It was predicted in 1 Timothy 4:1-2, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron." The end result of apostasy is many will lose their souls in eternity.

Many departures have occurred during the past 2000 years, which have resulted in hundreds of different kinds of denominational churches. Paul says, "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" (2 Timothy 4:3-4). The apostasy we are facing is not caused by those outside the church but from within. Paul warned the Ephesian elders, "Also from among yourselves men will rise up speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after themselves" (Acts 20:30).

Many in the Lord's church are wanting to be like the denominations around them just as the children of Israel wanted a king so they could be like the nations around them (1 Samuel 8:5). The spirit of denominationalism is steadily invading many congregations of the churches of Christ. Some now claim there are faithful Christians among all the denominations, and that water baptism is not essential for salvation. We read in Galatians 1:6-7, "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ."

It is being advocated that women should take a leading role in the worship of the church by leading prayer, waiting on the table, leading singing, teaching Bible classes with men present, and even preaching. They refer to themselves as a gender-neutral church of Christ. Many congregations have worship teams, also called praise teams, where women with microphones take part in leading the singing. Basically the praise team becomes a choir and is there for the entertainment of the audience, thus God is not being worshipped "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Instrumental music is again

being introduced into worship just as it was a little more than 100 years ago. To ease it in, some congregations have both an "instrumental" and an a cappella service. Some say that instrumental music is not a doctrinal or salvation issue and that it doesn't really matter. But Jesus says, "And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Mark 7:7). "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Colossians 3:17), which means by His authority. Since instrumental music is by the authority of man and not of God, the worship of one who sings with the instrument is vain.

There are those who are dropping the name "church of Christ" and changing their name to "Community Church" or to other names. They say they are removing Christ from their name in an effort to remove "a barrier", so they can attract more people. They seem to be ashamed of our Lord. Jesus says in Mark 8:38, "For whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father." Many have also turned to entertainment to attract more people. In order to keep the people they attract, they don't want to ever teach or preach anything from the Bible that might offend anyone.

A number of congregations are having fellowship with denominations through pulpit exchanges, joint worship services, and the ministerial alliance. We are warned in 2 John 10-11, "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that bids him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." We must never give a person encouragement in their false doctrine, if we do we also become guilty and could lose our own souls. The apostasy we are now facing in the Lord's church will rival and possibly surpass the apostasy that ravaged the Lord's church in the later part of the 1800's. When that particular apostasy was complete in about 1906, less than 180,000 members remained faithful, but more than one million went into the apostate Christian Church. Most of the problems, that are causing the apostasy now, were the same problems for the apostasy then. The same techniques which Satan was successful with then, he is using again. Satan just will not leave the Lord's church alone.

The reason we are facing this apostasy is the rejection of Bible authority and our lack of Bible knowledge. God says in Hosea 4:6, "My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge." Brethren are not studying their Bibles the way we did in the past. In our Bible classes many are studying other books and not the Bible. Instead of Bible study, it has become "book study". We are

becoming Biblically illiterate. Because of our lack of Bible knowledge, digression from the truth is continuing at an alarming rate in which many "untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the scriptures" (2 Peter 3:16). Some of the Bible class material that is being used in some congregations is denominational material that supposedly has been "edited", but it still contains denominational errors. If we teach our children denominational material, we will train them to be a denomination of the future. Since we have failed to learn a lesson from past history we are seeing the same problems arise again today. The attitude today is "I want it and I am going to have it".

We read in 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12, "because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion; that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believe not the truth." It is a shame millions of good people have chosen to believe the lies of Satan, and because of this, they will have to spend forever and ever in the burning fires of Hell. To protect ourselves against Satan we must have a strong faith. How do we obtain that faith? Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." The more we study the word of God the stronger our faith will be. We can protect ourselves from the present apostasy if we will only study, believe, and obey the truth of God's word without any additions or subtractions, and be faithful to it all the days of our life. We must speak out and warn others of our present apostasy so less damage will be done and fewer souls will be lost.