

# **BAPTIST APOSTASY**

**By Gordon Silcox, Copied from the Baptist Pillar**

The Word of God clearly teaches that in the last days just before the return of Christ for the saints there will be a falling away from the Truth. We read in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3: “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 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. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.”

Here we see the apostle Paul writing to the church at Thessalonica and exhorting them to remain faithful in spite of all their persecutions. He tells them that the day of Christ is at hand and an apostasy will take place before Christ returns for the saints. The words “falling away” in this text are old English words for an abandonment, a defection, a desertion or a departure from one’s faith. It is a forsaking of something once believed.

An apostasy or falling away is leaving the principles of one’s faith as set forth in the Word of God and either compromising them or clearly abandoning them. In the Word of God, the words “falling away” is the same in the Greek text, the Textus Receptus. We get the word apostasy from that word and the Authorized Version of the Word of God uses the term falling away. The apostle Paul tells the church in Thessalonica that in the last days, preceding Christ’s return for the saints, there will be a great falling away from the Truth once believed. Many will be affected by that apostasy.

An apostate is one who has rejected God’s Word and no longer accepts it. A truly saved person cannot become a full blown apostate. According to Romans Chapter One, one who continues to reject the Truth can become a reprobate. A reprobate is one who has been rejected by God. In 2 Timothy 3:8, we see an example of those who did reject the Truth and were finally rejected by God and became reprobate with no hope. In Titus 1:16, we see an example of some who professed to know God but whose works denied Him. A reprobate is one who has rejected the Truth and continued to fall away to a place of no return. The apostate or reprobate is then abandoned by God with no possible chance of ever being saved.

In 2 Timothy 3, the Word of God describes last day apostate conditions. Only the unsaved can fall away to a place of no return. The saved can backslide; they can, and do sin, and they are often affected by apostate conditions around them. It is possible for a truly redeemed person to lose the power of God on their lives because of their acceptance of apostate conditions around them. There must be a clear conviction that the Word of God is the sole authority in all matters of faith and practice. This is the only safeguard against apostasy. Whatsoever the Word of God says is Truth. Now, in the last days before Christ’s return, the majority of this world’s population will be caught up in a rejection and falling away from the Word of God. In the parable of Luke 18:1-8, our Lord makes it clear that at the time of His return, it will be difficult to find anyone still in the faith.

Luke 18:8: “I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on earth?” The reference here is not to personal faith, but to belief in the whole revealed

Truth. It means that as we get closer to the coming of Christ and the time of the Rapture, it will be difficult to find the faith once delivered to the saints. There will be changes, abandonments and alterings in various doctrines. If some of the apostles were alive today, they would be shocked at the apostasy in Baptist churches. Many of these churches and pastors are not even aware of their altered teachings. Instead of basing what they believe entirely on the Word of God, they have believed something from someone's book, school or philosophy. Colossians 2:8 warns us about that possibility. The apostasy of the last days will be a great one. Many will be affected by it. The falling away will be subtle, yet it will be great.

Now, it is obvious that no one can fall away from something they never possessed. Most of the major denominations, conventions, and cults never had the Truth in the first place. They were false prophets from the beginning, so they cannot fall away. They are already there. They were, and still are, preaching another gospel (Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15). Take, for example, those who teach that baptism saves and who usually add to that communion, confirmation, works, etc. That is a false gospel. That is another gospel. If they had, at one time, believed the true Gospel and now believe another, they are apostate. However, a modernist or a liberal who never believed the Bible may preach and teach some things the apostate teaches and preaches, but they are false prophets, not apostates.

An apostate is one who fell from the Truth, one who once did hear the Truth and has now denied or altered that Truth. So, who are the apostates of these last days? Those who once held the Truth. That is why the Word of God tells us to practice separation from those who are falling away from the Truth (2 Corinthians 6:14-17; Romans 16:17; Ephesians 5:6-8; Titus 3:9-10; Jude 3-4).

In light of what we have already discussed, let us look at the abandonment, the rejection, the falling away from the Truth, by those who call themselves Baptist. Those who once believed certain doctrines, but now either have denied those doctrines or altered them to fit the age. Those who have lowered their standards or compromised their earlier convictions and beliefs. Let's take a look at some of those doctrinal changes and see if there is an apostasy among some of our Baptist churches.

### **Baptist Apostasy and The Word of God**

When this writer attended Bible college, he was greatly moved when he saw the founder of that school hold up an Authorized Version of God's Word and call it The Word of God. That King James Bible to him and most of us present was God's preserved Word. That great old preacher said, "This does not contain the Word of God. This is the Word of God."

I heard him say many times, "The Revised Standard Bible is not the Word of God. It is a perversion."

Now today, I hear Baptist preachers preaching from those new versions which have come out of the Revised Standard Text. Men who once believed that the King James Bible is the Word of God, without error, have now abandoned it for the new perversions. They are now leaning on scholarship to interpret where the so-called errors are. Those of us who believe God has preserved His Word, without error, are accused of worshipping the King James Bible. We are not. It is a translation and God led in that translation. God has preserved His infallible, inerrant Word in the King James Version. Even if we were

worshipping it, at least we would be worshipping something we can see. Those who are always talking about the originals are worshipping something they have never seen. God has placed in the hands of English speaking people an inerrant copy of this final revelation to man. We do not rest our understanding of that dear old Bible on some man's scholarship. We rest it on the Spirit of God.

1 Corinthians 2:14: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

1 John 2:27: "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."

Many Baptists have abandoned their faith in an inerrant book and now rest their faith on scholarship. Baptists need to return to the faith of our fathers, in the Word of God. Our forefathers believed it and so should we. The apostasy concerning the Word of God is now among the Baptists. May God help us to resist that apostasy. The attack of the day in which we live is upon the authority of God's Word.

### **Baptist Apostasy and the Church**

The church that Jesus built is alive and well. It has never failed and never will fail (Matthew 16:18). We have an eternal promise from our Lord that the perpetuity of this divine church would continue. It did not start on the day of Pentecost. Jesus built the first one during His own personal ministry in Jerusalem. On the day of Pentecost, an existing assembly of one hundred twenty (120) members were empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:15: "And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty)."

Acts 2:1-4: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

Yet, today we are seeing Baptist churches and pastors teaching the universal, invisible day of Pentecost theory of the church. Our early Baptist forefathers in the first century did not believe such apostate doctrine. The universal theory came from Rome and the invisible theory from the Protestants. Genuine Baptists do not believe either of those false theories. Baptists are not Protestants and never have been. Even the Protestants admit to our early existence. Listen to what they said:

Alexander Campbell in the Campbell-McCalla Debate, "The church at Jerusalem was a Baptist church, and the church at Samaria was a Baptist church."

Moshiem, Lutheran historian, “The first century was a history of the Baptists.”

John Ridpath, Methodist historian, “I should not readily admit that there were Baptists then, as all Christians were then Baptists.” We now are seeing many Baptists forsaking their Biblical heritage and teaching and preaching the ecumenical doctrine of the universal, invisible church theory. It is time to resist the apostate trend of our day which will eventually lead to a one world visible church.

### **Baptist Apostasy and the Ordinances**

1 Corinthians 11:2: “Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.” Many Baptist churches have abandoned the scriptural practice of the ordinances. There is a falling away from scriptural baptism and closed Lord’s Supper. The practice of the Lord’s Supper is open in many Baptist churches and close in others. No longer do they practice and teach that only the redeemed and scripturally baptized saint, who is right with his church, can participate in the Supper.

In many of our Baptist churches, members are now allowed to participate in a close Supper practice. The Lord’s Supper is to be a time of remembering our Saviour, a time of heart searching, and a time of revival among the Members of the church. It is not to be a time of ecumenical associations. It is done in remembrance of our Lord. How can the unsaved remember Christ? How can a backsliding saint safely attend the supper? (1 Corinthians 11:23-34).

In the matter of Baptism, there is a falling away from the Biblical practice of believer’s baptism. Baptism in many Baptist churches has become a community affair. Many Baptist churches are accepting baptism from other churches, as long as it is by immersion. Even non-Baptist baptism is accepted. Some of these churches would not accept the doctrine of Pentecostal, Protestant, or cultic churches, yet they are accepting their baptism, which is just as alien as their doctrine.

Many of these false churches preach another gospel. Baptist baptism is to fit our Gospel — the death, the burial and the resurrection. Baptist baptism is the proper candidate (one who is saved), immersed into a scriptural church, declaring the design of that baptism (the resurrection to a new life), and done under the authority of a scriptural church. Christ only gave baptism to His true churches. And the Protestant churches, the Catholic churches, and the cults do not have authority to baptize (Matthew 28:16-20). There is a deepening apostasy in many Baptist churches concerning the practice of the ordinances. It is time to return to the faith of our fathers.

### **Baptist Apostasy and Separation**

We are seeing in our day a great falling away in the Bible doctrine of separation. Many of our Baptist churches do not practice Bible separation. We see a great truth concerning separation in 1 John 1:5-6: “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him

is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.” We are to separate from darkness. Whatever is contrary to the will and nature of God is darkness. God’s will for every saint is found in 1 Peter 1:15-16: “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

It is God’s will that we perfect holiness in the fear of God (2 Corinthians 7:1). We are to have no fellowship with the works of darkness.

Ephesians 5:11: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”

Baptists who fellowship, follow, or feast at the fountain of those who call the Pope a great Christian are walking in darkness. I would not trust any man or school to teach me anything, if he cannot discern the difference between Bible doctrine and Roman Catholic doctrine. Baptists who fellowship, follow, or feast with those who have evidence of disobedience to the Word of God in the area of separation are in danger of apostatizing themselves.

We are to separate from everything contrary to God’s will and nature. Baptists who are now falling away from Truth have started, in a small, subtle way, to lower their standards of separation (1 Timothy 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 3:5; Amos 3:3). We can only maintain purity and holiness by the practice of scriptural separation. We are commanded to practice holiness. Baptists who use the New Evangelicals, the modernists, the Protestants and the psychologists for their teaching are flirting with the works of darkness. Baptists will soon lose their testimony and identity and become another fish in the pond of the ecumenical age we are in, if they do not maintain Biblical separation. The command is to come out from among them and be ye separate. (2 Corinthians 6:14-17; Romans 16:17).

### **Baptist Apostasy and Divorce and Remarriage**

Another doctrine that has suffered greatly and has been abandoned much in these last days is the Bible teaching on divorce and remarriage. Our age is being greatly affected by the environmental trends of the age. Many influences are changing a correct exegesis of Scripture in this present age. Present day Baptists should remember that in the first five centuries, all Greek writers and all Latin writers, except one, agreed that remarriage following divorce was adulterous. The marriage bond, to these writers, was only to be broken by death. If a partner was guilty of adultery, they taught separation from that partner, but never did they teach divorce and remarriage. Even though these early church writers had many variations of their view, they all agreed (except one writer) that remarriage was unscriptural. Even in the case of 1 Corinthians 7:15, which was called the Pauline privilege, the early church fathers said that the deserted spouse had no right to remarry. The Roman Catholics said a believer deserted by an unbeliever could remarry. But what saith the Scripture:

Matthew 19:8b: “...but from the beginning it was not so.”

It has been this writer’s observation that many Baptist pastors and churches are altering their position on this doctrine to accommodate the age. The New Evangelical writers, pressure of members, electronic

ministers, seminars, etc., are having a great effect on many Baptists. Yet, the Bible is clear and has not changed. An example is false teaching concerning the so-called “exception clause” and what they call the bondage issue. Who determines what is the exception? Man or the Scripture? Moses granted an exception, because of the hardness of their heart, but the Scripture says that from the beginning it was not so. Baptist preachers are sitting at the confessional booth in the Baptist churches, determining who has an exception and can remarry. What is the difference between that and a confessional booth in the Catholic church? What is the difference between that and some so-called scholar telling us what is God’s Word and what is not?

Even such early writers as Origen, Tertullian, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, etc., refused to compromise on this doctrine, yet modern Baptists are. Clement went so far as to say that the marriage of those who had separated, while either spouse was alive, was not marriage but fornication. Evidently, he felt the first marriage partner is the only one God recognizes. We can be sure of one thing. The modern trend of divorce and remarriage is not based on a careful study of Scripture. It is based on compromise and convenience. Nearly all early writers on the subject believed that marriage was an indissoluble union. Where are the Baptists of today, who still believe this? Baptist apostasy is deepening. It is time to return to the faith of our fathers on this very important doctrine

### **Baptist Apostasy and Repentance and Faith**

Luke 24:47: “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” There are some very unusual things being said by Baptist preachers these days on the subject of repentance and faith. The trumpet is giving an uncertain sound in some Baptist pulpits on the matter of salvation. Many have abandoned the doctrine of repentance. One well known Baptist preacher called the preaching of repentance heresy. John the Baptist did not think it was heresy. Our Lord preached repentance, as did all of the early apostles.

Yet, we have some today who say repentance is not necessary. But according to Acts 3:19, it is. 2 Corinthians 7:8-10 teaches Godly sorrow and repentance. The doctrines of grace are a thing of the past in some Baptist churches. Now we are being inundated with an easy believism that is filling churches with unregenerate members, who know nothing of the Grace of God. The inner witness of the Spirit of God in the heart is an unknown factor in many Baptist churches these days. These must then prove to themselves that they are really saved by their religious efforts. According to 1 John 5:9-13, the truly saved know it. Repentance and faith produce a knowledgeable faith. Repentance is not a work. It is the gift of God, brought about by the Spirit of God. Without it no man will be saved. Baptist apostasy on the doctrine of repentance and faith is deepening and Baptists must not fall away from this very important doctrine.

### **Baptist Apostasy and the Lordship of Christ**

The proverb that says, “Either Christ is Lord of all or He is not Lord at all” is still true. Many Baptists claim that those who preach the Lordship of Christ have no scriptural basis. My answer to that is, “Is there any other kind of lordship?” Lordship is in salvation. When a person sees himself as a sinner, under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, realizes his only hope is in Christ, and then turns to Christ, what is he receiving? Not just a Saviour, but also a Master. To receive Christ is to receive Him as Lord. The

seeking sinner may not understand all of the theological terms, but he will be saved, if he repents and puts his faith in Christ.

The Spirit of God indwells, seals, and places the repenting sinner in Christ. That same Spirit will continue to purify him and every day of his life, he will be confronted with Who is the Lord of his life. The new birth produces a new creature, who is under the Lordship of Christ (Acts 4:12; Ephesians 1:15-23; Colossians 1:15-22). Does not Christ become the Lord of those He saves? Yes, some do rebel, but He is still the Lord of His creation. Our Lord often does correct those He has redeemed. Jesus Christ is Lord and all men need Him. Baptists need to preach, as they once did, on the Lordship of Christ. Baptists, of all people, should follow the first Baptist's example:

John 3:30: "He must increase, but I must decrease."

### **Baptist Apostasy and Preaching**

2 Timothy 4:2-4: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 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; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." Here we see another passage of exhortation to Timothy to remain faithful in the time of great apostasy. Paul tells Timothy to preach the Word. Preaching today has become a thing of the past in many of our Baptist churches. The Biblical emphasis is on preaching.

1 Corinthians 1:18, 21: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Here we see again the Biblical emphasis on preaching. Many of our Baptist churches have replaced much of their preaching with videos, TV, satellites, seminars, etc. There is less preaching today in the majority of our Baptist churches than at any other time in history. It appears that many churches are trying to compete with all of the media to hold and motivate their members. Yet, nothing motivates people better than hearing the Word as it is presented in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Bible emphasis is on preaching and hearing.

Romans 10:17: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." This has made those churches who stick to preaching and teaching strong Baptist churches. Those churches who do not place the emphasis on preaching and put more on videos, etc., have become entertainment centers. Television has created a generation of watchers, not listeners. People are so entertained by TV, videos, etc., outside the church, that they are fascinated by pictures and not by words. God's method, however, is by words, preaching and teaching.

Some of our members sit in the services like zombies, just waiting for something sensational to entertain them. We cannot, nor should we, compete with the entertainment world in our churches. Preaching is God's method. The TV or video screen emphasized seeing rather than hearing. Let's get back to the old fashioned preaching method, which is a Biblical command. The use of celebrities to bring in a crowd creates hero worship. Good sound Holy Spirit preaching will do more to build a church and keep it pure

until Christ returns than any other method. The use of overhead projectors, films, slides, videos, etc., are only minor aids to the major method of preaching. One can teach the Truth with some of those methods, but the greatest fruit is produced through preaching. It's time to pull the plug on TV, videos, seminars, etc., and get back to preaching. The less preaching we have, the deeper the apostasy!

## **Baptist Apostasy and The Great Commission**

In Matthew 28:16-20, Acts 1:8, Mark 16:15 and several other passages of Scripture, we see our Lord's command to preach the Gospel to the regions beyond. This is commonly called the Great Commission. Most would agree that we are to spread the Gospel to the entire world. The real difference comes when we discuss how it is to be done. Modern methods like the printing ministry, radio, television, etc., are only methods of getting the Gospel to a lost and dying world. However, the question of who has the authority to do all of this is a serious one. Most would agree that the church of divine origin, the New Testament Church that Jesus built, has the authority to baptize, teach, and send.

Yet, some of those churches who agree to that then yield to some mission board or agency. They do so by allowing the mission board to control the local missionary, his finances, and his discipline. This is contrary to the scriptural responsibility of the local church in the work of the Great Commission. Only the local church has the authority to preach, baptize, teach, and send. The mission board concept is not found in Scripture. The only mission sending agency in the Scripture was a local church (Acts 13:1-4). There are a lot of Baptist churches falling away from the Biblical pattern in spreading the Good News. Church authority rests on Scripture.

The Great Commission was given to the New Testament church, not to any board, agency, fellowship, or convention. It is time for present day Baptists to evaluate their present missionary efforts and return to the Biblical pattern of carrying out the Great Commission by sending their workers directly from the local church. Apostasy is deepening in the area of local church authority in the spreading of the Gospel. Let us return to the Biblical pattern, which is an indigenous pattern where the local body of believers is self-financing, self-governing, and self-propagating.

## **The Conclusion**

Many true believers are being effected by the apostasy of these last days. It is true they are not apostates, but they are being neutralized by apostate tendencies. They are being swept along in the flood tide of the denials of the age. They are no longer the "salt of the earth." They have lost their savor. Many have developed a system of compromise and denial, which sounds very convincing. But apostasy is apostasy. Our forefathers stood by the Truth, and so should we. We must not abandon it for convenience or for temporary peace with the world.

It is time for those who hold to the faith of the Book to stand up, speak up, and proclaim it. (Jude 3-4)