

## The Danger of Apostasy

When I firsts began serious Bible study in the middle eighties, I knew the road ahead would have its difficulties. What I didn't expect was that the most hurtful, and disappointing attacks would come from within the church (the body of Christ) itself.

Without question, the greatest threat to the church has always been false teaching. False teaching is a spiritual poison that eats away at biblical doctrine. External threats – such as religious persecution and the world's animosity – are certainly unpleasant, and the wounds they inflict are only physical and the injuries they cause are only temporary. On the other hand, however, the deadliest false teaching comes not from non-Christian religions outside the church, but from spiritual pretenders inside the church. And the resulting damage is far greater than that caused by any external assault; because the casualties are spiritual and the consequences are eternal.

Jesus warned His followers by saying, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:15-20).

Paul called the elders of the church at Ephesus together and said unto them, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 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 20:28-31).

The rest of the New Testament records similar warnings, instructing Christians to guard themselves against deception. When anyone assaults the clarity of Scripture, as the followers of the new movement called the Emerging Church, you can be sure that they are not interested in the teachings of Scripture. They want to liberate themselves from the guide lines of Scripture, by saying that the scriptures are not clear. Therefore, we cannot be dogmatic in our stand on Christian doctrine – so they say. They may not be able to be dogmatic, but I will remain dogmatic in my position on Scripture. Scripture is the only guiding tool that we have to determine error, and it is clear on this subject.

Scripture is the standard by which we measure what is true and what is false. We must guard ourselves against deception and apostasy, and the only way that this is possible is by knowing what the scriptures teach.

Question: What rule has God given to direct us how we may glorify Him?

Answer: The Word of God which is contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament (Ephesians 2:20; II Timothy 3:16) is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify God and enjoy Him (I John 1:3).

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