

How Apostasy Starts VIII

Showing the troubles and difficulties in the Apostolic Era

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How did the apostasy during the time of the apostles start? We know that in the book of Acts, the first part, the ministry of the apostles was all in the area of Judea and Galilee.

The first Gentile converts were Cornelius and his household. It's interesting that they were converted in the area of Judea. That proves a point that later Gentiles wanted to get rid of, which is that Jesus said, *'Salvation is of the Jews.'* Not their traditional practices, but the Word of God given to them. Those who were in Judea, the Gentiles—Cornelius the Centurion and his whole household—were keeping the laws and commandments of God. He even built a synagogue.

This becomes a very important thing when we get into the time of the Apostle Paul. Now let's see that we have:

- contention
- doctrinal differences
- false teachers
- false brethren

That means those who pretended to be brethren! Have you ever been in a situation where that happened, and then afterward you say, 'What happened to them?'

We're now at the point where we're examining the different things that showed the troubles and difficulties in the Apostolic Era. Remember that they were expecting the return of Christ during their lifetime. I'm sure that motivated them to not be as aggressive against the invaders of the world than they should be.

Let's see Paul's attitude. Here he's in prison. It's very interesting that Paul was in prison in Caesarea for two years. And it took a year to go to Rome, and he was in prison two years in Rome. No one has every rightly been able to figure why the book of Acts ends abruptly with no *Amen*. 3-John also does not end in *Amen*. We'll see the reason for that a little later.

So, here's Paul writing to the Philippians and he says, Philippians 1:12: "Brethren, I want you to know that the things befalling me have turned out rather unto *the* advancement of the Gospel."

A very important thing understanding this. What did Paul write about difficulties that you go through? *All things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose!*

So, he's looking at it this way, but what happened afterward? *We'll investigate that!*

Verse 13: "So that my bonds in Christ have become manifest in the whole palace, and to all others; and most of the brethren, trusting in *the* Lord, have been emboldened by my bonds to speak the Word more abundantly without fear" (vs 13-14).

Notice just a little something here telling you that things weren't right: v 15: "Indeed, some are proclaiming Christ out of envy and strife, but some with good intentions." **What's that going to lead to?** *Different doctrines and understanding!*

Verse 16: "On the one hand, those who are preaching out of a contentious *spirit*, and not purely, are thinking to add grief to my bonds." *Because in the Roman world the thrust was to get rid of the things of the Jews!*

They viewed the things that God gave to the Jews as a curse. They actually write and say that God gave the Sabbath Day to the Jews to curse them! A new convert comes along and says, 'Oh, you don't want to be there with the Jews, a curse because of the Sabbath. Come over here on Sunday.' Did you know they had Sunday-keeping immediately after John died? Not many people know that, but we'll get to that.

Verse 17: "But on the other hand, those *who are preaching* out of love know that I am set for *the* defense of the Gospel. What then *shall I say?* Nevertheless, in every way, whether in pretext or in truth, Christ is being proclaimed; and I rejoice in this, yes, and will also *continue to rejoice*" (vs 17-18). *We will see a little later that he changed his tune* (1-Tim.)!

Philippians 3:1: "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in *the* Lord. Indeed, for me to write the same things to you *is* not troublesome, but for you *it is* safe. Beware of dogs..." (vs 1-2).

This is talking about Judaizers who are trying to bring converts back into Judaism and minimize Christ.

"...beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision..." (vs 2-3). *The Jews prided themselves and all of those who were of Abraham's seed in physical circumcision!* Now in the Church it is spiritual circumcision of the heart and mind. That's the true circumcision.

"...who serve God in *the* spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in *the* flesh" (v 3)—

showing all the things he could trust in, but he wasn't going to trust in that.

Now let's see the goal, and this will add to what we covered in the sermon: *The Meaning of Baptism*.

Verse 14: "I press toward *the* goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.... [What is that high calling?] ...So then, let as many as *be* perfect be of this mind. And if *in* anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal even this to you" (vs 14-15).

That's part of the grace of God! God reveals things to you when things are not right so that you can change. You can repent, change and go forward.

Verse 16: "Nevertheless, *in regard* to that which we have attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.... [the mind of Christ; that's what we are to develop] ...Brethren, be imitators together of me, and bear in mind those who walk in this way, as you have us *for* an example. **For many walk contrary...**" (vs 16-18).

See the undercurrent of these things coming along? I think they neglected the seriousness of it, thinking Christ was going to return in their lifetime and that would take care of it all.

We have the same thing today. We have people who say that 'the Church of God doesn't need to preach the Gospel to the world; we'll leave that to the two witnesses. Where did you read that? *The two witnesses have a special mission!* We're to preach the Gospel regardless. Of course, with the websites we have, this year will be over 3-million, last year it was 4-million distinct visitors.

"...I have often told you *of* them, and I tell you now *with* weeping, *they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ.... [that is strong statement] ...Whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is* their belly, and whose glory *is* in their shame; *for* they mind earthly things. But for us, the commonwealth of God exists in the heavens..." (vs 18-19)—*the Kingdom of God is coming from heaven!*

The Catholics say, because Matthew calls the Kingdom of God *the Kingdom of Heaven*, that when you die your soul goes to the Kingdom of Heaven. And the Kingdom of God is the Roman Catholic Church on earth. That's *their* doctrine: *minding earthly things!*

"...from where also we are waiting for *the* Savior, *the* Lord Jesus Christ... [*here's the goal*]: ...**Who will transform our vile bodies...**" (vs 20-21).

Something has to be transferred first, before our vile bodies can be transformed. It is true, here we sit at Sabbath services. We're all nice and clean,

wearing our Sabbath best. We don't require ties, but I wear one for the video.

Romans 12:1: "I exhort you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, Holy *and* well-pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service. Do not conform yourselves to this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind...**" (vs 1-2). **How is it renewed?**

- by study
- by prayer
- by overcoming
- by walking in God's way

"...in order that you may prove what *is* well-pleasing and good, and the perfect will of God" (v 2).

Here's the second transformation, because it's transformed here with the Spirit of God, then at the resurrection this takes place:

Philippians 3:21: **"Who will transform our vile bodies**, that they may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the inner working of His own power, *whereby He is able* to subdue all things to Himself." *Notice the contrast all the way through!*

Colossians tells you a lot because if you understand about Greek philosophy this is what Paul had to fight against all the time. Here's the difference:

Colossians 2:6: "Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, be walking in Him... [walk in the footsteps of Christ by loving and obeying God] ...being rooted and built up in Him, and being confirmed in the faith, exactly as you were taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. **Be on guard...** [look what happened to the Church because we weren't] ...so that **no one takes you captive through philosophy and vain deceit**, according to the traditions of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ" (vs 6-8). *All the way through we have these warnings coming!*

Verse 9: "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." *When you understand the pyramid of the Greek gods, they had god for this, that and something else!* Then Zeus was the great god over all. Well, ***it's different with Christ!***

Verse 10: "And you are complete in Him, Who is the Head of all principality and power."

Verse 18: "Do not allow anyone to defraud you of the prize *by* doing *his* will in self-abasement and *the* worship of angels."

I recently got an e-mail asking if it was all right for Church members to play with tarot cards.

Those are cards that are demonic! They are used by demons to foretell things. So, the answer is *NO!* That's what this is talking about here!

"...intruding into things that he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his own carnal mind and not holding fast to the Head [Christ]..." (vs 18-19). So, *we have that warning there.*

Our detailed study of Hebrews is our longest study, 41 messages. This was written by Paul in 61^{AD} just before he was let out of prison. A lot of people don't know who wrote this, but if you read the commentary in *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version—Who Wrote the New Testament?*—you will see all of the aspects of why it has to be Paul. In the end he talks about Timothy and being in prison in Rome. So, it had to be Paul.

- What did you do the first time you wanted to look at the Bible?
- What was your attitude?

For most people it is to find something that confirms what he or she believes, rather than to find out what God says.

This is why when they get all involved in philosophy they get carried away with things that in philosophy sound logical, **but are not true!** So, the whole book of Hebrews is designed to show that it comes from God, through Christ and everyone is to follow Christ. The book of Hebrews went to all Churches, but the reason why Paul didn't put his name on there, he sent it to Jerusalem, and they almost killed him when he was in Jerusalem. **This would have been burned on arrival!** The first part of Heb. 1 sets the stage for the whole thing.

Hebrews 1:1: "God Who spoke to the fathers at different times in the past and in many ways by the prophets, has spoken to us in these last days by *His Son.*"

How long are the last days? *From the first coming of Christ to His second coming!* That's why Peter wrote 'a thousand years is as a day with the Lord and a day is as a thousand years.'

Verse 2: "Whom He has appointed heir of all things... [coming right against all the pagan religions] ...by Whom also He made the ages; Who, being *the* brightness of *His* glory and *the* exact image of His person..." (vs 2-3).

Why? *In 1-John there were those saying that Jesus didn't come in the flesh!* So, Paul is making it clear who he is and where he came from.

"...and upholding all things by the word of His own power..." (v 3). Remember what Jesus said before He ascended? *All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Me!*

Think about how powerful it is! Think about what we know about the universe just by looking at it and understanding that it is so vast and fantastic that our mind cannot grasp it.

Sidebar: What's it going to be like as spirit beings and go out in the universe? You have to be a spirit being to go out into the universe, because that's not a friendly place in the flesh. You either freeze to death or get burned to death.

"...when He had **by Himself purged our sins...**" (v 3). *In other words, there is no other way to have forgiveness of sin than through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ!*

- can't come any other way
- can't come by works
- can't come by tradition

It comes by yielding to God with God's Spirit and with His sacrifice and forgiveness of sin!

"...sat down at *the* right hand of the Majesty on high; having been made so much greater than *any* of the angels..." (vs 3-4).

What two denominations that I know of believe that Jesus was an angel? *Jehovah Witnesses and Latter Day Saints (Mormons)!* Of course, that cuts right across all the doctrines of the pagans, because all of their gods are varying degrees of demons manifesting themselves to people.

"...inasmuch as He has inherited a name exceedingly superior to them. For to which of the angels did He ever say, 'You are My Son; this day I have begotten You'?..." (vs 4-5). *Think about that for a minute!*

Go back to how Christ came and Gabriel made the announcement to Mary. Never did an angel ever do that, and that tells you that no angel has the power to forgive sin.

"...And again, 'I will be a Father to Him, and He will be a Son to Me'? And again, when He brought the Firstborn into the world, He said, 'Let all *the* angels of God worship Him'" (vs 5-6).

Didn't that happen when Jesus was born. Remember what happened? There were two shepherds out in the field and here are all the angels praising God to *The Highest* because Jesus was born.

Heb. 3—Paul shows the problems because people were backing away from keeping the commandments of God.

Hebrews 3:7: "For this reason, even as the Holy Spirit says, 'Today... [that applies for the day all down through time] ...if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart, as in the rebellion, in the day of temptation in the wilderness, where your fathers

tempted Me *and* tried Me, and saw My works forty years” (vs 7-9).

What was the worst thing they did when Moses was on the mountain? *They came and said, ‘Aaron! Up! Make us gods! We don’t know what happened to Moses He’s up on the mountain and maybe he fell in and the lava burned him up! Maybe he’s never coming back!’* What did Aaron say? *Bring your gold! And he fashioned a golden calf!*

Sidebar: I’ve often wondered if Aaron was an idol-maker in Egypt. How did he know to make a golden calf? So, he made it! Right there at the end God says that the Sabbath is a perpetual covenant. So, here they are worshipping this calf, not on the Sabbath Day in rebellion against God. Then you read about all the other times they rebelled, too.

Paul says to be careful and don’t do that!

Verse 9: “Where your fathers tempted Me *and* tried Me, and saw My works forty years. Because of this, I was indignant with that generation, and said, ‘They are always going astray in their hearts...’” (vs 9-10).

See the difference in Old Covenant and New Covenant? *The O.C. didn’t change the heart! The N.C. changes the heart and mind!*

“...and they have not known My ways.’ So, I swore in My wrath, ‘If they shall enter into My rest—’” (vs 10-11).

Entering into God’s rest, or even the Kingdom of God, is an ***IF*** with us, *not with God!* Go back and see what He said to them and He would give them every blessing of everything physically that they wanted.

Hebrews 4:1: “Therefore, we should fear, lest perhaps, a promise being open to enter into His rest, any of you might seem to come short. For truly, we have had the Gospel preached *to us*, even as they also *did*; but the preaching of the Word did not profit them because it was not mixed with faith in those who heard. For we who have believed, we ourselves are **entering into the rest...**” (vs 1-3).

This means *the Sabbath!* Every week we enter into the Sabbath. Eventually, this means that we’re going to enter into the Kingdom of God. Are you going to enter into the Kingdom of God if you’re not keeping the Sabbath through your lifetime? From the time you’re converted until you die and are resurrected? *No!*

“...as He has said, ‘So, I swore in My wrath, ‘If they shall enter into My rest—’” although the works were finished from the foundation of *the* world. For He spoke in a certain place about the seventh *day* in this manner: ‘And God rested on the

seventh day from all His works’” (vs 3-4). *So, when you keep the Sabbath you enter into God’s rest, being the Sabbath!*

What do the Protestants say today? *Jesus is our Sabbath, and He kept it! So, since He kept it, we don’t have to keep it, and we can keep Sunday!* That’s basically what they say. It’s awfully translated in the *King James!*

This is talking about the Sabbath, v 5: “And again concerning this: ‘If they shall enter into My rest—’ [which is contingent upon Sabbath-keeping] ...Consequently, since it remains *for* some to enter into it, and those who had previously heard the Gospel did not enter in because of disobedience, again, He marks out a certain day, ‘Today,’ saying in David after so long a time (exactly as it has been quoted *above*), ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.’ For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken *long* afterwards of another day. **There remains, therefore, Sabbath-keeping for the people of God**” (vs 5-9). *That is the literally correct truthful translation!*

He didn’t say, ‘Therefore, there remains for the Jews Sabbath-keeping.’ ***or*** ‘Therefore, for the Hebrews there’s Sabbath-keeping.’ ***It’s for the people of God!***

Are the people of God in the New Testament, other than those who are converted? If you’re not keeping the commandments of God, you’re not the people of God! ***If you are the people of God*** then you’ll be keeping the commandments, and you’ll be keeping the Sabbath!

Here’s a great warning that there’s already a great erosion toward the Sabbath!

Scriptural References:

- Philippians 1:12-18
- Philippians 3:1-3, 14-21
- Romans 12:1-2
- Philippians 3:21
- Colossians 2:6-10, 18-19
- Hebrews 1:1-6
- Hebrews 3:7-11
- Hebrews 4:1-9

Also referenced:

- Sermon: *The Meaning of Baptism*
- Sermon Series: *Hebrews*
- Commentary—**Who Wrote the New Testament?** (*The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version*)

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