

# THE PROPHETIC WORD IN CRISIS DAYS

Prophetic Messages Delivered at the West Coast Prophetic Congress  
in the Los Angeles, Calif. area in mid-1961

by

Various Contributors

Copyright @ 1961

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### THE PROPHETIC WORD AND APOSTASY

J. VERNON MCGEE

**“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (I Timothy 3:16).**

The great basic truth of the Christian faith is that God was manifest in the flesh. Some nineteen hundred years ago God entered this world in human flesh, and rose from the dead. This is the Christian faith. This is the Gospel that we are to preach to the ends of the earth.

But the prophetic Word foresees a time in which men will no longer stand true to the faith once delivered.

**“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron” (I Timothy 4:1-2).**

The term “**expressly**” alerts us to the fact that what the Holy Spirit is about to declare is of great importance. It is something that must not be ignored. The reference to latter times clearly assigns the prophecy to the closing days of this age in which we are living. The burden of the Spirit's utterance here is the assertion that “**some shall depart from the faith.**”

Of special interest to us is the word “**depart.**” In the Greek language it means *to stand away from*. In the latter times, some are going to stand away from the faith. The meaning is that some who once professed to believe in the true faith and who stood for it will come to stand away from it. This is what we call apostasy.

Apostasy could not occur among the primitive heathen of Inland Africa for the simple reason that the Gospel has never gained entrance there. There can be no apostasy where there is no church. Apostasy can only take place among those who have professed to believe the great truths of the faith. By definition the term itself has reference to those who have defected from the basic, original truth of the faith.

There can be no doubt that widespread departure from the faith has occurred in our day. This in fact characterizes all of the major denominations to some degree. Some of the older denominations which have the very finest historical confessions of faith no longer stand for their own doctrinal creeds. In some instances, they give lip service to the creeds but the preaching does not bear any evidence that the creeds or the Scriptures are believed any more. The upper echelons of denominational leadership in many instances deny the verbal inspiration of the Word of God.

- They no longer believe in the deity of Christ.
- They no longer believe that God was manifest in the flesh.
- They no longer stand for the Biblical truth that the Lord Jesus Christ shed His blood on the cross for the sins of the world.

They have departed from the faith. The apostasy is upon us today.

We are told that in the latter days men will give heed to seducing or deceiving spirits and to teachings of demons. It is our firm conviction that there is a manifestation of demonism in liberalism, in the cults, and in many of the religions of this world today. It is such a manifestation of demonism that we can almost say that the most damnable thing in the world at this present hour is not communism, but religion.

Religion has damned more people than anything else in this world. It needs to be added, of course, that true Christianity is not a religion. Indeed it is a Person. The heart of our Christian faith is that God was manifest in the flesh. But men in these last days are standing away from this truth, and religion, which is at opposite poles from Christianity, represents and promulgates the doctrine of demons.

In writing to the Thessalonian Christians, the Apostle Paul referred to the apostasy of our times as *a falling away*. He declared that there would have to be a falling away prior to the great tribulation period and prior to the revelation of the man of sin.

The Apostle John in the second and third chapters of the book of Revelation gives us a prophetic history of the church. That history begins with the message that the Lord gave to the church in Ephesus and it concludes with the message to the church in Laodicea. It begins with the apostolic church and it concludes with the apostate church.

The messages to these seven churches had a contemporary meaning. Our Lord was speaking directly to churches of that day, but this does not exhaust that which is revealed in the passage. There is a composite interpretation. There is to be found in the message to each church a lesson for us today. There is also a chronological interpretation.

As we look back over the ages we can mark out seven definite periods of church history. The message to each of the seven churches has reference to a particular period of church history. It is possible to trace the development of the experience of the church in this world and to see the intrusion of evil and error.

The leaven has been added to the meal, and evil is spreading through the church today. The church has become powerful and pompous. It is one of the greatest organizations on earth. In this divine history recorded in the book of Revelation, it is easy to trace the rise of Romanism. The church in Thyatira was charged with the sin of granting permission for Jezebel to teach and to usurp authority, and the rise of this wicked Jezebel system concludes with the picture of the harlot in the great tribulation. The Lord declared that He would cast that church into the great tribulation. This is the church that goes through the great tribulation, but it is not Christ's true Church. Christ's Church is a Bride caught up to meet Him in the air before the tribulation breaks upon this earth. This apostate church is referred to as the harlot because it sold itself to the world.

The Protestant Reformation is another movement that may be traced in the divine history given us in the second and third chapters of Revelation. Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, and the other Reformers were very great men. Thank God for each one of them. But the Lord's message to Sardis is, “. . . **thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead**” (Revelation 3:1).

The protestant Reformation never did make a great impact. The influence and effect of that movement soon died out in the world, besides the Reformation never even touched the Greek Orthodox Church, the Armenian Church, the Coptic Church, or the Church of England. It only drew out a remnant of people from Roman Catholicism. Although reformation was witnessed in Germany and other parts of Europe, the movement never brought real revival. It was never a great world-sweeping movement at all.

Today we are living in times represented by the message to the church in Laodicea. The very Germany where Martin Luther conducted his Reformation movement has been the incubator of liberalism. Out of Germany came the various speculative hypotheses which questioned the integrity of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and the Pauline authorship of certain New Testament Epistles. Thus we see that the Reformation did not have any lasting effects because Germany was the first to throw off the authority of the Word of God.

The very nation where the Protestant Reformation occurred and where the Bible was first translated into the vernacular of the people in due course fell down and worshipped a house painter by the name of Hitler. Those who refused to grant allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ were heard to shout, “Heil Hitler!”

When men refuse to listen to God, they are very likely to worship men as God. We are drawing closer to that place in world history at which men must either have Christ or Antichrist. Men who refuse Christ today become open markets for anti-God move merits which are appearing all over the globe. Multitudes even in America are being swept into communism. Communism is having great success among the intelligentsia today. Those who will not have Christ will have Antichrist.

A survey of the history of some of our higher educational institutions in America will serve to indicate how far Christianity in this country has gone along the road to apostasy. In making the first request for Harvard University, John Harvard charged the students of that institution to regard Jesus Christ as the only foundation of all knowledge and learning.

But Harvard has gone very far astray from that original position.

Long ago it adopted a Unitarian Theology and became so rationalistic that Yale University had to be founded in order that a true school of the prophets might be available. But in due course Yale also went down the road to apostasy.

At the time of George Whitfield's revivals in New England neither Harvard nor Yale responded to the spiritual message. They openly denounced the revival movement. Later Princeton University was established because of the desires of godly men to have a true school of the prophets. But again, it was only a matter of time before Princeton University became as apostate as Harvard and Yale. All three of these once great institutions are anti-God and anti-Christ today. They receive money from rich men who founded these institutions for the defence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and their faculties are so impregnated with unbelief and atheism that their main work is to destroy that very Gospel. No where are the signs of apostasy more glaring than in the educational realm.

Shifting to the religious realm, we find that the major denominations which compose the National Council of Churches are in the depths of apostasy. The platform of the National Council of Churches calls for friendly relations and cooperation with communist countries, for United States recognition of communist China, and for the admission of communist China to the United Nations. It is difficult to understand how any Christian can retain membership in an organization that would support such a platform at this critical hour of world history.

Dr. William Ward Ayer of New York has summed up the situation with characteristic appropriateness:

“The nations of the world are working feverishly on a universal program for an amalgamation of the world's nations, races and religions. It's the most idealistic program unregenerated men have produced thus far but it's completely foreign to God's revealed purposes for the nations. The United Nations Assembly is the proposed instrument for the national amalgamation, while the World Council of Churches, with other religious organizations, is the religious instrument that seeks to bring all the religious thinking and practice of the world's peoples into one world-wide completely uniform religious amalgamation. And it will be accomplished one day and when it is, the judgment of a Holy God will fall upon it.”

It is evident that the denominations are actually moving toward Romanism today. The day is fast approaching when all of apostate Protestantism will join hands with Romanism. A number of the top leaders of the Protestant groups are now beginning to express themselves in favor of this very thing. Even communism is making rapid advances into the churches today. There is abundant evidence that this is the case, in spite of the fact that some of our leading Protestant liberals have denied this accusation when it has been placed at their doors. A leading economist today has made the statement that the communists are winning the cold war because a considerable part of Christian leadership has embraced socialistic ideology which is now openly confessed by American churchmen occupying high positions.

This same leading economist stated:

“The United Church Herald carries a startling statement by Dr. Nels Ferre, avid Professor of Christian Theology at Newton Theological School. Dr. Ferre says his hope and goal is that the Christian forces disassociate themselves from capitalistic ideology and strike out confidently for a social, economic, and political order that envisages true democracy and that makes world peace its immediate goal. Thus he repudiates capitalism and takes his stand for socialism. The communists are winning the cold war because so large a part of the leadership in Christian educational, cultural, and commercial circles has lost confidence in a society which emphasizes individualism.”

A great many men occupying so-called Christian pulpits in America today are very definitely socialistic. Many of them believe that the kingdom of God which they are attempting to build is a great socialist order on this earth. Protestantism in America today is in grave danger. Some of our leading national periodicals have recently featured articles on this very subject.

Viewing Protestantism on a world-wide scale, as the present moment it has about seven percent of the world's population as adherents. At the present rate of change, only two percent of the world's population will be nominally Protestant by the end of the present decade. Protestantism today is actually a minority group.

We who hold the fundamentals of the Christian faith are all too likely to congratulate ourselves on our spiritual successes and to feel that everything is going wrong in the world except our own cause. However, Fundamentalism itself needs to be shaken today.

Fundamentalism is doctrinally correct, but in many instances it has lost its integrity. Its emphasis upon doctrine has been wholesome, but it has failed to emphasize the Christian life. The best of doctrine is of little value unless it finds application in the lives of people and manifests itself in the realm in which people are living. When only less than ten percent of students graduating from evangelical Christian institutions today are going into foreign missions, and when fifty percent of them become casualties on the mission field, there is evident need for Fundamentalism to take inventory of itself.

Mr. Kennedy's peace corps boasts a prospective one hundred thousand volunteers, but where are the volunteers who will carry the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth today? Those who feel that all is well with the Fundamentalist cause should interview a few of our top missionary statesmen today. They are finding it increasingly difficult to obtain qualified candidates for missionary service. This is a dark hour in fundamental Christian circles, and it's time for Fundamentalists to open their eyes to the real truth and to cease boasting about their accomplishments. It's time to quit blowing the bugle and singing “Onward Christian Soldiers” and to get on our knees and pray as never before.

It is abundantly evident that we are living in days of apostasy. What can God's people do in this crisis hour, when the clouds of apostasy gather all over the world and threaten the very foundations of our faith? Only the Word of God has the remedy for such a situation.

The Epistle of Jude, which features one of the most vivid descriptions of the apostasy to be found in all the Bible, discloses a course of action for Christian people in days of apostasy. Specifically, Jude mentions three things that we may do in view of apostasy.

*First, we are to build ourselves up in the most holy faith.*

The Bible is being attacked as never before today, and teachers in theological institutions are leading the attack. But there is still nothing in the world worthy of preaching except the Word of God.

How can a person build himself up in the most holy faith? only by increasing his knowledge and obedience to the pure Word of God. Every minister should be fully committed to the Bible today, and those who do not believe in the integrity of the Book should in common honesty forsake the pulpit and enter some other pursuit. The Bible is the only place where a Christian can build up the fortresses of his spiritual life.

One reason why so many professing Christians are collapsing today is that they have not been building themselves up in the Word of God.

*The second suggestion which Jude gives us is that we should be praying in the Holy Ghost.*

He has in mind here real Spirit-wrought prayer. The most lifeless service in most of our churches today is the prayer meeting, and the reason is that we are not praying in the Holy Ghost. Real prayer only occurs when the Holy Spirit is moving through us.

Too many people are just praying words and going through the form.

This is an hour in which real prayer is needed. Many people simply run through the same little routine of prayer in every meeting, and there is not the laying hold of God that characterizes true prayer by godly people. We need reality in prayer today, and this is possible even in days of apostasy.

*Thirdly, Jude exhorts us to keep ourselves in the love of God.*

God has fully demonstrated His love for us. When we were helpless sinners Christ died for us. This is real love. God loves us, but it is possible for us to get out of the love of God. God's love is something like the sun, which always shines, but we can stand in a shady place so that the sun will not shine on us.

Likewise, it is possible for us to get into the shade spiritually and thus to fall out of the will of God. This is what it means to get out of the love of God. God still loves us, but we may get ourselves into a position where His love is not shed abroad in our hearts. Thus God's love is not effective in our lives and we do not radiate it to others.

These are days in which we should keep ourselves in the love of God by confessing all known sins and walking in the Spirit.

The tragic days of apostasy foretold in the Word of God are surely upon us.

Sinister forms of error, never known in previous ages, are exerting themselves everywhere.

- Our denominations have fallen upon evil days;
- Our educational institutions have become incubators of heresy and
- The ecumenical movement gathers up in it all of the Satanic systems of religious but unregenerate men.
- Communism is a godless and fanatical religion which stands opposed to all that is called God.

The picture is indeed a dark one, but the people of God need not waver. If we take care to build ourselves up in the faith, to pray unceasingly in the Holy Ghost, and to keep ourselves in the love of God, no storm of apostasy will ever cause us to drift from our spiritual moorings.

**~ end of chapter 15 ~**

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>

\*\*\*