

Beware of Counterfeits

The Marks of an Apostate

Mark 13:1-6

In 1888 C. H. Spurgeon said, "Everywhere there is apathy. Nobody cares whether that which is preached is true or false. A sermon is a sermon whatever the subject; only, the shorter the better".¹

Well, only 105 years later the attitude persists in some circles. The inroads of False teachers is staggering. Recently these two well known Christian leaders went on record with these astounding words.

First in the book *Lonely no more*² the author declares she has found her very own personal spirit guide. By way of visualization she has found her 'idiot child within' who is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ ! Such words are staggeringly in error.

Secondly, the Boston Globe [9/5/93] reports that after a recent religious Parliament of World Religions the leader of a branch of over 40 million American Christians declared, "all religions carry the same message..the ancient wisdom of our religions can point the way for our future."³ May I add THE WRONG WAY! Look at our text Mark 13:5-6.

God says in His Word: CAUTION DECEPTION AHEAD. In the gospel of Mark, chapter 13 there is danger coming and Jesus gave a warning sign to help those in the days leading up to the end.

A general outline of the 13th chapter of Mark:

1. v.1-4 = BEWARE OF DISTRACTION
2. v.5-6 = BEWARE OF DECEPTION
 - False Teachers [Mt. 24:23-28]
 - Workers of Signs And Wonders [Dt. 13]
 - Apostates [II Peter; Jude]
3. v.7-8 = BEWARE OF DEPRESSION
4. v.9-13 = BEWARE OF DEFECTION
5. v. 14-37 = BE ALERT

We must always remember that miracles are not a proof of divine calling and approval, only the Word of God is the final test. See Deuteronomy. 13:1-5 and I John 4:1-8.

¹ John MacArthur, *Ashamed of the Gospel*, Wheaton: Crossway, 1993, p. xi

² Dave Hunt, *Berean Call*, February , 1994, p.1.

³ Ibid, p. 4.

Jesus said watch out for counterfeit religion. When faced with a similar situation at the turn of the century, evangelicals produced a work called the FUNDAMENTALS in 1909-1915. The writers read like a Who's Who of Christianity of the day: R.A. Torrey, B.B. Warfield, J.C. Ryle, G.Campbell Morgan, C.I. Scofield, James M. Gray [MBI], A.T. Pierson and so on.

These men distilled down the fundamental beliefs that distinguish a true believer from a false or counterfeit one. They boiled down to:

1. The Inspiration and Reliable Historicity of the Bible.
2. The error of Evolutionism and Darwinism.
3. The naming of the cults errors [Jehovah Witness, Mormonism, Christian Science, Spiritism].
4. The reality of sin.
5. Biblical salvation by faith through the grace of God.
6. The errors of Romanism.
7. The Deity, work and Return of Christ.

So what does a counterfeit Christian look like? They will usually have one or more of these elements:

1. A DENIAL OF THE EXCLUSIVITY OF THE FAITH I Timothy 4:1 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; (KJV)

Acts 4:12 ¹² Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. (KJV)

Remember Matthew 7:13-23:

- True believers are those who ENTER GOD'S WAY [v. 13-15 it is narrow, small and they are few]
- True believers are those who BEAR GOD'S FRUIT [v.16-20]
- True believers are those who DO GOD'S WILL [V. 21]
- True believers are those who KNOW GOD INTIMATELY [v. 22-23]
- True believers are those who ACT ON THE WORD OF GOD [v.24a if God says it they believe and obey]
- True believers are those who BUILD THEIR LIVES UPON THE ROCK [v. 24b]

2. A DENIAL OF LIVING THE SEPARATED LIFE 2 Timothy 3:1-2 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. ² For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, (KJV)

Over the years this error has been called worldliness. What is it?

1. Listen to Joe Stowell President of Moody Bible Institute:

OUR SENSE OF PURITY HAS CHANGED. I hear people say they are "mature enough" to handle nudity, pornographic innuendo, and violence in movies, on

network TV, and on cable. The movies we used to boycott were like Sunday school picnics compared to what we now watch at home.

WE PREACH LESS OF HEAVEN, HELL, and eternity and more of this life, happiness, and temporal success.

WHILE THE WORLD IS TAKING a second, harder look at alcohol, we are becoming more comfortable with it as a beverage.

Institutions of learning, once used of God to train godly people to minister with zeal and commitment, now downplay personal sanctification and produce skepticism and doubt in students' hearts.

Seminaries founded to teach sound doctrine openly deny the inerrancy of Scripture and cast doubt on the historicity of God's Word. Yet they continue to enjoy a measure of respect among some evangelicals.

We are compromising, and in compromising we are losing -- losing the edge of our uniqueness in Christ. We find ourselves conformed to the image of this world [Rom. 12:2].

If we do not re-establish personal righteousness in our changing world, we will forfeit our ability to make a difference in people's lives. We cannot make a difference if we are not different.

2. Pastor Kent Hughes of The College Church of Wheaton says⁴:

But for the Christian, the most chilling fact is this: there is little statistical difference between the ethical practices of the religious and the nonreligious.

Sadly, Christians are ALMOST as likely as non-Christians to:

- Falsify their income tax returns
- Commit plagiarism [teachers especially know this]
- Bribe to obtain a building permit -- "That's the way business is done."
- Ignore construction specs.
- Illegally copy a computer program
- Steal time.
- Commit phone theft.
- Exaggerate a product
- Tell people what they want to hear
- Selectively obey the laws.

3. John MacArthur writes⁵:

...the "contextualization" of the gospel today has infected the church with the spirit of the age. It has opened the church's doors wide for worldliness, shallowness, and in some cases a crass, party atmosphere. The world now sets the agenda for the church.

This is demonstrated clearly in a book by James Davison Hunter, a sociology professor at the University of Virginia. Hunter surveyed students in evangelical colleges and seminaries, and concluded that evangelical Christianity has changed dramatically in the past three decades. He found that young evangelicals have become significantly

⁴ Excerpts from DISCIPLINES OF A GODLY MAN, Hughes; Page 121

⁵ Ashamed of THE GOSPEL, Mac - p. 102

more tolerant of activities once viewed as worldly or immoral -- including smoking, using marijuana, attending R-rated movies, and premarital sex. Hunter wrote,

The symbolic boundaries which previously defined moral propriety for conservative Protestantism have lost a measure of clarity. Many of the distinctions separating Christian conduct from "worldly conduct" have been challenged if not altogether undermined. Even the words WORLDLY and WORLDLINESS have, within a generation, lost most of their traditional meaning... The traditional meaning of worldliness has indeed lost its relevance for the coming generation of Evangelicals.

What Hunter noted among evangelical students is a reflection of what has happened to the entire evangelical church. Many professing Christians appear to care far more about the world's opinion than about God's. Churches are so engrossed in trying to please non-Christians that many have forgotten their first duty is to please God [2 Cor. 5:9]. The church has been so over-contextualized that it has become corrupted by the world.

4. Os Guinness warns:

From "Recycling the Compromise of Liberalism," *Tabletalk* 5/92, 51

What is the future of evangelicalism? In a perceptive series of articles on the church-growth movement, Os Guinness points out that traditional evangelicalism not only resisted worldly influences, but also stressed "cognitive defiance" of the world spirit. Evangelicals historically have understood that their calling is to be in the world but not of the world. Now, however, "at the high noon of modernity, the world has become so powerful, pervasive, and appealing that the traditional stance of cognitive defiance has become rare and almost unthinkable." Somewhere along the line evangelicals decided to make friends with the world.

Guinness points out that although we are called to be in the world but not of the world [John 17:14-18], many Christians have reversed the formula, becoming OF the world while not really being IN the world. They did this by allowing cable television, VCRs, radio, and other forms of communication to infuse worldly values into their thinking, while isolating themselves from any personal involvement with the people in the world who most desperately need the gospel.

5. Non-Christian author Joyce Thompson says:

BRAVE NEW GODLESS WORLD - [WORLD, 7/31/93]

Video games are going to deal Christian mythology its greatest blow," contends non-Christian author Joyce Thompson in the slick "cyberpunk" journal MONDO 2000. "The fact that a kid can choose among worlds and plug into them will make established religion irrelevant. This creates a problem for long-held belief systems. The games will make them seem dull... Today's video designers will become the new priests.

CONCLUSION: Now, what the cure? Look back at First Thessalonians. Remember the seven C's of holy living?

4:1 = our *conduct* pleasing God by

4:2 = our *commands* obeying His
4:3 = our *calling* stay pure
4:4 = our *committment* avoid sin
4:5 = our *contrast* be renewed
4:6-7 = our *caution* fear God
4:8 = our *challenge* go on to more