

END TIMES APOSTASY

TEXT: I TIMOTHY 4:1-5

INTRODUCTION:

1. First Timothy 4 predicts a terrible apostasy which will take place in "the latter times" (4:1).
2. The word "apostasy" is not found in the Bible. The word means, "departure from the faith" (4:1).
3. Some apostates are easy to recognize. For example, preachers who deny the deity of Christ are obviously apostate.
4. But sometimes, apostates say some good things, and they blend in with true believers. That makes them more dangerous.
5. Jesus called them "wolves in sheep's clothing" (Matthew 7:15).
6. The apostle Paul said the same thing to the elders of Ephesus, "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" (Acts 20:29, 30).
7. A.W. Tozer said, "So skilled is error at imitating truth, that the two are constantly being mistaken for each another. It takes a sharp eye these days to know which brother is Cain and which is Abel."
8. The Bible warns us that this apostasy will get worse in the days leading up to the second coming of Christ. Soon the antichrist will emerge, and the world will worship him. In fact, they will worship the devil.
9. "And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?... And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:4, 8).
10. And though this apostasy will get worse as we draw close to the second coming of Christ, "the latter times" (I Tim. 4:1) started back in the days of the apostles. First Peter 1:20 says Christ "was manifest in these last times for you."
11. Hebrews 1:2 says God "hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son."
12. Referring to the rise of antichrist, I John 2:18 says, "Little children, it is the last time."

13. The apostasy was already setting in during the apostolic era. The *Scofield Study Bible* correctly points out that in II Timothy, II Peter, and Jude, "the apostasy is treated as having already set in" (p. 1328).
14. Paul said in II Thessalonians 2:7, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work..."
15. Note the word "some" (4:1; cf. 1:6, 19; 5:15, 24; 6:10, 21).

I. DEMON-LED APOSTATES (4:1)

1. Devils (demons, or "seducing spirits") are behind religious error, false cults, and apostasy (4:1).
2. Apostates give heed (yield) to these seducing (deceiving) spirits.
3. There is a contrast in I Timothy between sound doctrine and devilish doctrine (1:3, 10; 4:1, 6; etc.).
4. In his commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, John Phillips has a long, very informative section on apostasy (pp. 110-120), going into details on the occult, evolution, liberal theology, the New Age movement, and other doctrines of devils. He mentions that Adolph Hitler and his fellow Nazis were all involved in the occult, and they established a Federal Commission of Occultism.

II. LYING AND HYPOCRITICAL APOSTATES (4:2)

1. Apostates "speak lies in hypocrisy." They say they are Christian but they are liars. They are really working for Satan.
2. The crowning sin of the Pharisees was hypocrisy. They were religious hypocrites. Our Lord said in Matthew 23:2 and 3, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not."
3. In fact, the word "hypocrites" is found 20 times in the Bible, and 17 times they are in reference to the Pharisees.
4. In Matthew 23, our Lord said, "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" eight times.
5. In I Timothy 4:2, Paul says, "having their conscience seared with a hot iron." Phillips says, "They will be beyond the reach of the convicting work of the Holy Spirit" (*Exploring the Pastoral Epistles*).
6. "Having their conscience seared with a hot iron" means these religious apostates are insensitive to right and wrong. That is why they lie with impunity. That is why many of them are adulterers.
7. Second Peter 2:10 says they "walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness."

8. Second Peter 2:14 says, "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls."
9. Second Peter 2:15 says they "have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray."
10. Second Peter 2:18 says, "they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness (lasciviousness, unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness)."
11. Jude 8 says they are "filthy dreamers" that "defile the flesh."
12. Jude 16 says they "walk after their own lusts," and Jude 18 says they "walk after their own ungodly lusts."
13. Jude 19 says they are "sensual, having not the Spirit."
14. Because their conscience has been "seared with a hot iron," they are insensitive to right and wrong. That is why many of them support homosexuality and abortion.
15. That is why many of them smoke, and drink alcohol, etc. They are sensual, and do not have the Holy Spirit. And none of this bothers them because their conscience has been seared with a hot iron (4:2).

III. UNSCRIPTURAL DOCTRINES OF THE APOSTATES (4:3)

1. "Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats" indicate a false asceticism.
2. Already in Paul's day, similar errors were being taught by the Gnostics. Gnosticism was a strange, obscure movement, partly intellectual, partly mystical, which spread rapidly in the first and second century. It is refuted often in the New Testament epistles (cf. I Tim. 6:20, 21).
3. "Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats" also sounds very much like some of the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.
4. The RCC will not allow their priests and nuns and monks to be married, and this is contrary to Scripture (cf. I Tim. 3:2, 4, 5).
5. Priestly celibacy has destroyed the lives of many families as the RCC moves their homosexual priests from one parish to another, where they continue to molest little boys.
6. It has been estimated that over half their priests are homosexual.
7. Recently a homosexual priest named Mark Dowd told CNN that, "Homosexuality is the ticking time bomb in the Catholic Church."
8. The archbishop of Scotland was forced to resign after British newspapers published accusations of decades-long perverted sex with other priests.

9. American Cardinals and bishops regularly face allegations of covering up abuse. And Italian newspapers recently published sordid accounts of homosexuality and blackmail within the Roman Church hierarchy.
10. It is alleged that Pope Benedict resigned because he could not handle all of the homosexual priests.
11. Vatican journalist Marco Politi said, "Here in the Vatican, there are Monsignors who have love affairs, with women and with men. But they hide it" (cf. I Tim. 4:2, 3).
12. Politi said that when Cardinal Ratzinger was elevated to the papacy, he wanted to "turn a new page" on the sex abuse scandal. "He understood how deep this problem was," Politi said. "But he has not had the courage to order all the bishops to open the archives to see the hidden victims, which are still thousands and thousands all over the world."
13. The new pope, Pope Francis, has acknowledged the existence of a "gay lobby" in the Vatican and says he is consulting advisers on what to do about it.
14. Rumors over the existence of a gay cabal in the Vatican have circulated for years but this is the first pope to publicly acknowledge it.
15. In addition to the RCC, the SDA cult also commands its members "to abstain from meats" (4:3).

CONCLUSION:

1. "For every creature of God is good" (4:4), and God has meant for us to enjoy them (4:3-5). In moderation!
2. There are some commentators who think that "which" in verse 3 -- "which God hath created" -- refers both to the foods and to marriage.
3. In other words, God has created both marriage as well as foods, and both are good.
4. That is possible, but Paul seems to center his attention in verses 3-5 on eating foods.
5. Hebrews 13:4 says, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."
6. Therefore, "which" in verse 3 -- "which God hath created" -- could refer to both food and marriage, because both are good.