

Apostates Then and Apostates Now **by Fred DeRuvo – Study-Grow-Know Ministries**

In Acts 4, we learn that shortly after the men had buried Ananias, Sapphira entered and Peter asked her the same question he had just asked her husband about whether or not they were giving all the money to the church they had made on the land they had sold. She also answered in the affirmative, as her husband had, and she also fell dead. The same men who had just finished burying Ananias arrived just in time to remove Sapphira's dead body for burial.

Imagine if these two individuals had been allowed to get away with their lying. It was not important that they gave *everything* to the church. The problem was that they lied about what they *did* give. They could have honestly said to Peter that they sold their property and were giving only *part* of it as a donation to the church. That would have been fine, as they were under no obligation to begin with to give *anything* to the church. They went above and beyond the requirements by deciding to sell the land and offer even part of it to the newly formed and growing Church. It was because they *lied* about the true amount they gave to the Church that God took their lives. This became a warning for all in the Church.

Now, the big difference between Ananias and Sapphira and all the apostates that Jude is referring to is that on one hand, apostates are not truly part of the authentic Church, whereas Ananias and Sapphira *could* have been and likely were part of it. If so, God merely took Ananias and Sapphira home *early*, before they should have died, because of their sin of lying to God – as if He would never know.

Apostates, on the other hand, are not only *not* part of the authentic Church, but really have no *desire* to be part of it. Their only desire is for *themselves*, and they will use whatever means necessary to gain what they believe they need and want.

An excellent example of this today can be seen in the lives of many TV and radio preachers. When looking below the surface and past their Christian-sounding verbiage, it becomes clear that money is their god and they do whatever it takes to gain more of it, even using the gospel as their chief means.

I could easily name names, but you may be thinking of the same type of person that I am thinking of here. Look at the TV evangelists who have these large non-profit corporations. They dress in the best suits; they have huge homes on acres of land somewhere, with horses, cattle, and all the rest. How does that work, one might ask?

Many of these individuals teach and preach that they are no different from us, except that they have learned to put their faith to good use. Sure they have, in feeding and catering to themselves. They tell us that we can be just like them if only we will begin to trust God.

The reality is that these people are charlatans and do *not* want us to become just like them because then there will be one less person to support them and their lifestyle. Oh sure, occasionally they will have someone on their show who purportedly has learned to use his or her faith the way they do, but more often than not, these people are plants, designed to encourage the listeners to believe that Joe or Jane Average can exercise faith like the TV evangelist, and look what happens! It's all a terrible sham.

These individuals are apostates because they are using religion to acquire things that they want in life. When you see them in a one-on-one interview, they *appear* humble, they *quote* Scripture, and they *talk* about God as if they truly know Him, but inwardly, they are wolves, merely pretending to be sheep. Over time, they have become masters at deception, and their net worth proves it.

I am *not* saying that God never causes any of His children to become rich. There are many Christians who are wealthy through hard work and God's blessing, and they use their resources wisely for God's Kingdom. There is nothing wrong with that.

I'm referring to people who use *religion* as a means of becoming rich. In God's Name, they *fleece* people, most of them poor already, out of what they have, and they have absolutely no remorse about what they do.

There are many evangelists within the Word of Faith movement, for instance, who do this. They preach a "name-it-claim-it" type of theology in which all we have to do is use our faith to *draw* the things we want/need to us and God will *have* to do it. This is absolute garbage and it is the highest insult to God's sovereignty and holiness, reducing Him to the level of some genie in a bottle.

The reason many succumb to it is because they do not know the Scriptures themselves but simply rely on what these TV evangelists say on the air or write about in their books. The problem, of course, is that for the most part, what these individuals teach is largely taken out of its original context and therefore made to say something else entirely in order to prop up their lifestyle as being the "correct" way to live the Christian life.

I will never forget one time I was watching the Larry King Live show. His guest was Tammy Faye Baker (long before she and Jim had divorced and she had become ill due to cancer). King asked her: if Jesus was alive today, would He be wearing (at the time) \$500 suits? Would He live like a millionaire in large homes and have expensive cars? Without

hesitation, Baker responded that she believed He would and that He would be a “man of the times.”

This is patently ridiculous. He could have easily been a “man of the times” during His own lifetime. The Pharisees and Sadducees were wealthy, most beyond measure. They wore the nicest robes and had the expensive homes and ate the best food. Jesus *could* have done that if He had wanted to compromise, but He didn’t want to because it was not the Father’s will for His life. Moreover, much of the money that the Pharisees gained was gotten through cheating fellow Jews.

That’s all the time we have for today. I want to thank you for joining me and listening to these 15-minute audio messages. We will continue on in the book of Jude then move into other areas of theology and study after that.

Until we meet again, may the Lord open your eyes to show you how blessed you are in Him!