

3 Steps to Avoid Apostasy in the Last Days

Can you guess the largest religious group in the Democratic Party?

If you said Christian, you would be wrong. The same is true if you said Jewish or Muslim. The largest religious group in the Democratic Party is now the “religiously unaffiliated.”

According to Fox News, the Democratic National Committee (DNC) unanimously passed a resolution, at its recent summer meeting in the “sanctuary city” of San Francisco, embracing the values of “religiously unaffiliated” Americans as the “largest religious group within the Democratic Party.”

According to the Secular Coalition of America, this unsurprising Democratic decision is the first time a major political party has formally embraced humanistic values over Judeo-Christian values. This is an alarming recognition of our growing, secular culture and its commitment to political correctness.

Where did all the formerly religiously affiliated go? Did they really exist? Have they “backslidden” or actually “apostatized” and rejected God or renounced their religious faith?

Spiritual Crises and the Last Days

Paul taught young Pastor Timothy: “Now the Spirit clearly says that in the last times some will depart from the faith and pay attention to seducing spirits” (1 Tim. 4:1a).

This departing from the faith is translated in the NIV as “abandon the faith.”

The word in Greek means “a determined defection or revolt” and

signifies a total abandonment of something or someone.

Many in the contemporary Christian world were stunned earlier this summer when two highly recognized and regarded “faith influencers” publicly abandoned their Christian faith.

Author of *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* and former pastor Josh Harris first announced by social media that after almost 20 years of marriage, he and his wife Shannon were separating, and he no longer considers himself a Christian nor desires others to consider him as such. He described this giant leap toward apostasy as a “deconstruction” of his faith.

He also stated that he was reevaluating his views on the LGBTQ agenda and apologizing to them for not supporting same-sex marriage and affirming their place in the church. He followed that up by attending and posting pictures of himself at Gay Pride events in Vancouver, B.C.

Then, former Hillsong United songwriter Marty Sampson revealed on social media, “[I’m] genuinely losing my faith.” Sampson was a songwriter and worship leader for the mega-music ministry in the '90s. He posted on social media that he was giving up on Christians and Christianity. He said he struggled with various issues regarding science and “contradictions in the Bible.”

However, he subsequently clarified on Instagram that he has not “renounced” his Christian faith, but that it is on “incredibly shaky ground.” Both he and Harris need our prayers so that these rather public fallings from the faith do not have to be final.

Peter, you may recall, publicly denied the Lord Jesus three times in one night!

Previously, Jesus had foretold Peter of this testing:

“Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to have you, to sift

you as wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have repented, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:31-32).

The Bible tells us that Peter "wept bitterly" in repentance after the denials and later exhorted Jewish believers in his epistles to endure suffering and to be faithful to Jesus Christ to the end. History shows that he faithfully endured for decades as a leader in the early church, before being crucified upside down as a martyr, at his request, because he did not feel worthy to die in the same manner as his Lord.

Here are three scriptural statements about the possibilities of apostasy or abandoning our faith:

1. John the Baptist spoke bluntly that "He who believes in the Son has eternal life. He who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him" (John 3:36).

2. Jesus told the disciples in the Olivet Discourse that during a future, stressful season of troubles and persecution, "many will fall away" and "because iniquity will abound, the love of many will grow cold" (Matt. 24:10-12).

3. Paul explained to the Thessalonians that our Lord's Second Coming, our being "gathered together unto him" (raptured), and the future Day of judgment and God's wrath (the "day of the Lord") on unrepentant nonbelievers "will not come until the rebellion occurs" (2 Thess. 2:3b, NIV).

More than a "generic" form of spiritual rebellion or defections from faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by false or weak believers, the apostasy described by Paul has the definite article "the" with it in the original Greek. It projects a specific, spiritual rebellion that then reveals "the man of sin," who "opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God" (2 Thess. 2:4a, MEV).

While Harris and Sampson are “deconstructing” their faith, we can wisely “reconstruct” ours by reviewing and renewing biblical foundations for our faith. We can make sure our footings are sound and the materials of our lives are in compliance with God’s Word. It will help us reaffirm our own convictions and equip us to stand strong in times of adversity, tribulation and doubt.

How to Believe and Behave as a Christian in the Last Days

The apostle John specifically states twice in the first nine verses of the book of Revelation that he was imprisoned on the Isle of Patmos for his witness to “the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 1:2a, 9b). While the Word of God reveals the will of God, the testimony of Jesus Christ reveals the way of God (John 14:6).

The English word “testimony” is the Greek word *marturia*, from which our word “martyr” is derived. Its use in Revelation is also translated as “patience” or “patient endurance.” The witness for Jesus Christ, during the harsh days of tribulation to come, is described as exhibiting “patience” (Rev. 13:10b and 14:12). Pastor Jack Hayford has described the term as “steadfast courage under unjust suffering.”

The implication is that the attestation, evidence or certification the witness gives is true and they are willing to die to prove it. Revelation 12:11b specifically says the overcomers “loved not their lives unto the death.” On the basis of the efficacy of the cross of Christ Jesus our Lord and the authority of God’s Word, the martyr/witness does not shrink from the possibility of martyrdom. This “patience and faith of the saints” (Rev. 13:10b) sustained them in the midst of tribulation and trials.

And it will sustain us, as well. Let us encourage and empower each other so that our faith will not fail, as we would “keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (14:12) in the

last days!

Avoiding Apostasy in the Last Days

Jesus Christ affirmed the church in Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-8), telling them that they had kept His word and had not denied His name. That seems to be the secret to avoiding apostasy in the last days! Keep His word (or commandments) and do not deny His name.

Paul taught that our God is faithful and will strengthen us and protect us from evil and the evil one (2 Thess. 3:3). As we live in the last days, we will not be immune from troubles and persecutions, caused by sinners and Satan (Matt. 24:3-14). But we will be immune from the actual “wrath of God” (1 Thess. 5:9) on unrepentant sinners (Rev. 6:15-17).

Jesus said: “In the world you will have tribulation. But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world” (John 16:33b).

Here are three important factors to avoid apostasy in the last days:

1. Spiritual faithfulness: illustrated by Paul’s last-days exhortations (1 Thess. 5:8-11, 15-24).
2. Patient endurance: during trials and tribulations (1 Cor. 9:24-27, 10:5-8, 11-13; Heb. 10:23-27).
3. Determined devotion: “But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith. Pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in the love of God while you are waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, which leads to eternal life” (Jude 1:20-21).

Our Lord’s half-brother Jude ends his brief epistle with this benediction:

Now to Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you blameless before the presence of His glory with

rejoicing, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25).

Listen to the podcast to learn more!