

John Piper: Can Jesus Worshipers Become Blatant Devil Worshipers?

Pastor and theologian John Piper recently responded to a podcast listener who appealed to 1 Timothy 4:1 to ask whether “Christ-worshippers” can “become blatant demon-worshippers.”

The man, named Leland, asked Piper to explain what is happening in the text, with Piper using the opportunity to address whether a “true, born-again worshiper of Jesus” could “be led astray into the kind of demonic deception that Paul has in mind.”

Before we delve into Piper’s full response, let’s explore Paul’s words in 1 Timothy 4:1 (ESV). He writes: “Now the Spirit expressly says that, in later times, some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons.”

Piper began by noting a difference between people who call themselves Christians and genuine believers “deep down in their hearts.”

“I think Romans 8:30 teaches that those who are predestined are called, and those who are called are justified, and those who are justified are glorified, so that no genuinely called and justified Christian ever falls away into demon worship—not permanently, anyway,” Piper said. “So then, the question becomes (and I think this is what he’s asking), ‘What is happening when people in the church, who have been in the church for years and are outwardly identifying as Christian and yet are not truly born again, are swept away into the teaching of demons?’”

The theologian said the mention of “deceitful spirits” is

noteworthy, and seems to call believers to be discerning and, as Scripture proclaims, not to believe every spirit.

Paul's concern, according to Piper, is that "professing Christians will pay too much attention to deceitful spirits and not test them with biblical truth and be carried away into the teaching of demons."

Beyond that, Piper said Paul was speaking about a departure from the Christian faith which will ramp up in later days. Piper added it appears there will be a "greater temptation" as the end times inch closer and Jesus' return is nearing.

Piper invoked Christ's words in Matthew 24:12-13 (NIV) as well. Those Scriptures read: "Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved."

Regardless of the ramping up, though, the "spirit of deception is always at work in some measure in this fallen age," Piper added.

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