

A Traitor in Jesus' Church

Gospel of John, Part XLVII

John 13:21-30

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I. The Church's One Foundation (Mt 28:20)

*The church shall never perish! Her dear Lord to defend,
To guide, sustain, and cherish, Is with her to the end.
Though there be those who hate her, And false sons in her pale,
Against or foe or traitor She ever shall prevail.*

The Tyndale Bible Dictionary defines apostasy as, "Turning against God, as evidenced by abandonment and repudiation of former beliefs. The term generally refers to a deliberate renouncing of the faith by a once sincere believer... Apostasy is distinguished from... transfer of allegiance from one religious body to another within the same faith" (1:130).

II. Jesus Identifies His Betrayer

A. The Announcement (21-22)

B. The Identification (23-26 cf. 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20)

C. The Commission (27-30)

III. A Further Theology of Apostasy

Christ so protects His own, that those who do apostatize were never truly part of His people. As Paul writes in Romans 9:6, "Not all who are of Israel are _____." Or as Matthew Henry put it, "*Stella cadens non stella fuit.*"

A. Apostasy happens

God's church is not a utopian community; it is a mixed multitude, composed of all those who have been baptized in the Triune Name and who confess Jesus as Lord. There are some who are lawfully part of that community who are not salvifically connected to Jesus. Hence, apostasy happens.

Apostasy has happened throughout history. The prophets address it (Is 1:4; Jer 2:19); Jesus illustrates it in the parable of the sower (Lk 8:13); the epistle of Hebrews warns against it (3:12). Consider the cases of Demas (2 Tim 4:10), Diotrophes (3 Jn 1:9), Hymenaeus, and Alexander (1 Tim 1:19-20). Paul warned the Ephesian elders:

Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

- I. Prologue: The Identity of the Son of God (1:1-18)
- II. Jesus Proven to be the Christ & the Son of God in His Public Ministry (1:19-12:50)
 - A. The Son of God Revealed (1:19-4:54)
 - B. The Son of God Rejected (5:1-12:36)
 - C. Conclusion (12:37-50)
- III. Jesus Proven to be the Christ & the Son of God in His Passion and Resurrection (13:1-20:31)
 - A. Introduction: He knew His hour had come (13:1)
 - B. Jesus Prepares the Disciples for His Departure (13:2-17:26)
 - C. Jesus Departs this world to the Father (18:1-20:29)
 - D. Conclusion: Purpose of the Gospel (20:30-31)
- IV. Epilogue: The Future Mission of the Son of God (21)

Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

B. Apostasy is inexcusable (cf. 12:6; 13:2)

While apostasy happens, it doesn't "just happen." It is the culmination of unrepented small sins. Even as it is possible to grow in holiness by the power of God's _____, so it is possible to descend into greater wickedness by the influence of the _____.

"At first Satan suggested the thought of betrayal to Judas. Judas acts on this. Perhaps he thought that he could keep the matter in hand and could drop the plan if he should after all so desire. But when the sinner yields to the extent of playing with a sin, he often ends by becoming the helpless plaything in the hands of the sin and of Satan who is behind the sin." R.C.H. Lenski

C. Apostasy is foolish (cf. Rev 21:14)

Third, apostasy is foolish. Apostates exchange the glorious promises of the Gospel for short term pleasure or safety or glory. C.S. Lewis writes in *The Weight of Glory*:

"It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."

D. Apostasy is painful (cf. Ps 41)

Fourth, apostasy is painful. Apostasy causes discouragement to the people of God, often causes others to stumble into sin, causes genuine believers to doubt their salvation, and causes distrust to swell among the ranks.

E. Apostasy serves God's purposes (13:3, 10, 18, 27; 19:11 cf. Acts 4:27-28)

Even apostasy mysteriously serves the purposes of God. God is the one who uses even the wicked actions of wicked men to accomplish His righteous and holy purposes. Jesus is Lord; He rules. R.C.H. Lenski writes:

"Judas thought that Jesus was in his hand; Jesus tells him that the reverse is true. It is Jesus who orders Judas about this business, to carry it out when Jesus wants it done and not when Judas may feel like doing it... When men are determined to do evil, a higher hand controls their deeds for ends that are utterly beyond them" (Lenski, 951-52).

F. Apostasy doesn't justify censoriousness (Lk 17:1-10)

¹ Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come!" ² It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. ³ Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. ⁴ And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him."

IV. Conclusion