

God's Controversy with Israel (7)

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III. The Warning to Judah Against Apostasy and Judgment

B. Avoid Profane Swearing

1. As swearing trivially, rashly, falsely, deceitfully

“Do not swear, ‘Yehovah hay’” i.e. **Jehovah lives! Or Jehovah is living!** What is forbidden here is the not using God's name as required, i.e., not exalting His good name **alone**. One may not lump Jehovah's (Jesus') name in common with Moses, Plato, Aristotle and Zeus. Also forbidden by this command is (1) the abuse of His name in ignorance of His being and attributes (Acts 17:23); (2) light, empty usage of His name, as in “God bless!” or “Lord, love you!” (3) the irreverent use of His name, as in “O lordy, lordy!” or the frivolous and habitual use of “Hallelujah!” (4) the profane use, making God's name common as in the frequent and thoughtless, “O my God!” (5) the superstitious use, as in mantra-mumblings of **Ave Marias** and **Pater noster**s; (6) as in all blasphemous cursings and swearing (as in Peter's denials); (7) profane oaths (such as using “damn it!”) (8) sinful usage of lots (Esther 3:7; 9:24): this includes the wicked gambling **lottery**, which **ignores** God's name, law and divine providence, Cp. Larger Catechism, Q. 1A. 113. These forms of swearing are some of the earlier signs of apostasy and must be rooted out of a Christian's life by prayer, confession of sin, repentance and speaking the **truth** in love.

2. Swear as commanded (Jer. 4:2).

a. in **truth**

“Thou **shalt** swear, “Yehovah hay! i.e., Jehovah lives, or Jehovah is living **in truth.**” This means to constantly and consciously **live** in recognition that to the Christian God's existence is the most sacred **fact** and reality! “The Lord liveth” is **the** most basic presupposition and proposition of the Christian faith. No proposition could better express **certainty**.

b. in judgment

Thou shalt swear “the Lord lives” in judgment, i.e., one must **never** think of God's name (His being and persons) abstractly, apart from **His judgment**, which is the only standard of right and wrong, and concerning which nothing is more **awesome!** Therefore, we must never use expressions which objectively invoke dead or non-existent gods or idols, as Allah, Confucius, or use such expletives as “By Jove!”, “by Jupiter,” or “ye gods!”

c. in righteousness

To swear **Jehovah liveth** in righteousness means that God's names, titles, attributes, words, sacraments, works and worship be holily and reverently used in thought, meditation, speech, writing and manner of life. (See Larger Catechism, Q. A. 112).

C. Apostasy a defection of the church.

Apostasy describes the present defection of the professing church from true Christianity. It is a defection or falling away from the God of truth and His commandments. The devil was the first apostate since he remained not in the truth, John 8:44. He revolted from obedience to God and became the ringleader of all rebels and apostates, whether angels or men. The fall of our first parents was in itself fatal, but Christ so intervened (in the gracious divine intervention of Christ's substitutionary atonement) that they fell on Him. To be sure, in the Fall the elect fell also, but they fell in and on the responsibility of Christ, and so were recovered from the Fall. The rest fell on their own responsibility, and so perished.

We have examples of apostasy in Cain (Gen. 6:2), in the case of that Micah of the times of the judges (Jud. 17:1-13), in Joash (2 Chron. 24:17-22), in Amaziah (2 Chron. 25:14, 27), in disciples who depart from Christ (John 6:66), in Hymeneus and Alexander (I Tim. 1:19-20).

Apostates are described as sons of Belial who depart from the professing church, drawing an aberrant following along with them into idolatry. Apostasy was such a detestable abomination to God in the Old Covenant church that He commanded that apostates be exterminated by capital punishment, and every whit that belonged to them be destroyed by fire, Deut. 13:13. The New Covenant church is warned against apostasy – departing from the living God – which the natural man is inclined to by “an evil heart of unbelief” (Heb. 3:12). Apostates are “stony ground hearers” of the Word of God, who for a while believe, ever receiving the Word of God with joy until, under testing and trial, they fall away (apostatize). Luke 8:13. It is love of this world which draws away souls into apostasy (2 Tim. 4:10). But apostates never really belonged to the true church. “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us, but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us” (I Jn. 2:19). Apostates never belonged to Christ (Matt. 7:21). John tells us in his epistle that all apostates are antichrists and that they originate in the church. Therefore, heathenism, Judaism, Mohammedanism, though hostile to Christ and to Christianity, are not “antichrist” in the sense of these apostates, not having originated in the church. Apostates were either false from the start, like the mixed multitude which came along with Israel out of Egypt, or they became so and then left, like Israel under Jeroboam.

But saints do not become apostates. They may declare the truth, “Our heart is **not** turned back, neither have our steps declined from Thy way” (Ps. 44:18). Of apostates, Scripture informs us that once they do fall away (apostatize), it is impossible to renew them to repentance, and so recover them. It is not only **difficult** that this should be, or rare that it should ever happen; it is absolutely impossible. It is impossible for these to be renewed and to recover themselves. It is impossible for ministers to recover them. It is impossible for God Himself, for their sin is the sin against the Holy Spirit, for which there is no repentance and no remission. But of God’s beloved saints we are persuaded better things, things that **do** accompany salvation. We cannot be so persuaded concerning apostates. For apostates there is no restitution.

Zephaniah, in the century after Hosea, prophesied of the guilt and punishment of the apostates of his day (1:4-6). So also the writer of the Hebrews pronounced divine vengeance and fearful judgment against them, as those who draw back to perdition in distinction from us, the people of God, who believe to the saving of the soul, Heb. 10:25-31, 39. Peter also, in 2 Peter 2, warns of apostate teachers, and describes their identifying marks: they (1) have forsaken the right way, (2) are gone astray, (3) follow in the way of the false prophet Balaam, (4) are destined to eternal darkness, (5) allure through the lusts of the flesh, (6) are entangled and overcome in the pollutions of the world, (7) turn from the holy commandment (Mark 12:29-31).

True believers are cautioned against becoming apostates. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.” Heb. 3:12. Here is warning that in profane, ungodly sinners, and in hypocritical professors, there is an evil, unbelieving heart, and that there is unbelief in the regenerate; and that there is for all hypocrites and apostates a final and total departure from Christ, from His gospel, from His people, and from their former profession. But this is never the case with true believers “...there is a **partial** departure...for a **while**, which they are liable to...attended with bad effects to them (which) should be guarded against. Saints should take heed to themselves, and of their hearts, and of the unbelief in them that they do not in the least depart from Christ...” (John Gill). “Ye, therefore,

beloved, seeing that ye know these things before, beware lest ye also being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness” (2 Pet. 3:17). “Though the saints can never finally and totally fall into sin or from the truth, yet they may fall from their steadfastness” of profession and of exercise of the grace of faith.

Just before the return of Christ, **the** apostasy shall occur (2 Thess. 2:3) in which “some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons....” (I Tim. 4:1-3). The final stage of apostasy is Spiritism (Rev. 13:4). When the churches apostatize they often defect to the cults. The cults today are almost invariably involved in the occult. The occult shows itself quite commonly in Spiritism. The principle errors of this evil of Spiritism are animism and monism. Spiritism nowadays takes various forms. It takes one form in Swedenborgianism, chiefly centering around a strange and corrupt angelology. It takes yet another form in Muslimism. It has its own peculiar form in Mormonism. It has a very Satanic form among the Children of God (the Family of Love). It takes yet another form among the UFO cultists. It is really a form of spiritism among so-called Evangelicals to speak of the possibility “that God may send angels even today in specific cases” Billy Graham accepts the idea of this possibility. “But no one should seek communication...even with angels. We are told to seek God alone and are exhorted to know His Word.” (Dave Hunt in **The Cult explosion**, 154-155). See Isa. 8:19, 20. Prominent converts to and dabblers in Spiritism were writer James Fennimore Cooper, politician William Cullen Bryant, journalist-publisher Horace Greeley, Queen Victoria. Canadian Prime Minister MacKenzie King was a convert to Spiritism. Carl Jung, the psychologist, was heavily into the occult, grew up in a “poltergeist” house, and was a medium (trance channeler) for his “spirit guide” going by the name of Philemon. Jung then may be said to have been a spiritist medium for “Philemon the demon.” Tal Brooke is one of the most recent converts from Hindu spiritism. This form of apostasy culminates in the open worship of Satan himself. It is the ultimate form of faithlessness, and is terminal error. It actively rejects God in Christ, and actively embraces the **replacement** of God – **Antichrist**.

-END OF “GOD’S CONTROVERSY WITH ISRAEL”-

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