

2020 in Hindsight: The Apostasy, Part Two

Peter Ditzel

In Part One, we saw that the events of 2020 exposed the immense apostasy of American Conservative Christianity and how easy it was for professing Christians to fall into the apostasy through politics. Now, let's look at some more ways that God used 2020 to expose the apostasy.

In 2020, We Saw That:

COVID-19 REVEALED THAT MANY PROFESSING CHRISTIANS GIVE MORE PRIORITY TO THEIR RIGHTS THAN THEY DO TO LOVE FOR THEIR NEIGHBORS

One of the saddest things I saw in 2020 was the refusal of many professing Christians to wear masks to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. These people sometimes refer to the now disproven ideas that masks are ineffective or masks make you sick. But nearly invariably, the real motive of most is they believe that the government telling them to wear masks is a violation of their Constitutional rights. Some even believe that elements in the government and media are purposely exaggerating the seriousness of the pandemic and are using masks as a way to train people into being what they call "sheeple." Sadly, these unfortunates are already "sheeple," having given their minds over to quack scientists and conspiracy theorists.

I shouldn't have to cite the many times Jesus and the writers of the New Testament point out the centrality of love in the life of a believer. It takes precedence over any perceived violations of Constitutional rights. Even if the Christian doesn't believe masks do any good, he or she should wear them for the sake of others in the community. Don't let your brother or potential brother be grieved because of your bare face (see the principle in Romans 14:15).

Jesus told us to love our neighbor and be a light to the world. If people feel unsafe because we're not wearing a mask or obeying distancing rules, we're violating his rule of love. Unfortunately, the Christian Right always seem to place individualism over community. Biblical Christianity is quite the opposite.

If there is therefore any exhortation in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassion, make my joy full, by being like-minded, having the

Copyright © 2021 wordofhisgrace.org

Permission is granted to reproduce this article only if reproduced in full with no alterations and keeping the copyright statement and this permission statement intact. Unless otherwise noted, Bible references are from the World English Bible (WEB).

2020-in-hindsight-the-apostasy-part-two.pdf

same love, being of one accord, of one mind; doing nothing through rivalry or through conceit, but in humility, each counting others better than himself; each of you not just looking to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others. Have this in your mind, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, didn't consider equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, yes, the death of the cross.

Philippians 2:1-8

If Jesus could do that, can't we put a piece of cloth on our faces and keep our distance? We're not to call ourselves Christians and then turn around and put the Constitution of the United States (whether we're understanding it correctly is not the issue) ahead of Christ's command to love our neighbors: "You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, 'These people draw near to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. And in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrine *rules made by men*' " (Matthew 15:7-9, emphasis added).

MANY EVANGELICAL, PROTESTANT, AND BAPTIST LEADERS WERE WILLING TO PUT THEIR BRETHREN, THEIR NEIGHBORS, AND THE NATIONAL AND WORLD COMMUNITY AT RISK TO ATTEND CHURCH WITH NO RESTRICTIONS

Related to the "no mask" mindset is the idea that God considers it more important for Christians to attend church than to show love to the community. I have no doubt that there is no Spirit of Christ behind this attitude, but only carnality. Churches that continue to hold meetings without obeying restrictions have shown their true colors. I now know that they stand for another religion, another gospel, another christ. Theirs is the religion of individualism, churchianity, a Christian America.

"A Biblical Case for the Church's Duty to Remain Open"

(<https://www.gracechurch.org/news/posts/1988>)

[The holes in the reasoning behind this statement would make a Swiss cheese envious]

"Members of John MacArthur's Church Say They're Being Pressured Not to Report New COVID Outbreak"

(<https://julieroys.com/covid-outbreak-macarthur-intimidated-not-report/>)

"The Myth of American Pro-Life Christianity"

https://johnpavlovitz.com/2020/12/11/the-american-myth-of-pro-life-republican-christians/?fbclid=IwAR09vprxCZodNdvffi_OwJhW4cZFvp13qrT7e7cWau-obL038PrA82qG1Tc

*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitened tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.
(Matthew 23:27)*

The death toll from COVID-19 in the United States is now over 400,000, yet these churches have the effrontery to say there's no pandemic!

In 2 Timothy 1:7, the Bible says that God gives His people the spirit of a sound mind (*sōphronismos*). *Sōphronismos* is not mere "self-control," as some translations render it, but it is Spirit-led soundness of judgment and the discipline to act upon it.

Yet, millions of professing Christians show lack of sound judgment by imagining that God places church services above love for others, and acting as if putting a piece of cloth on the face is a sin and violation of human rights. They don't even have as much wisdom as the Jewish scribe who understood that loving one's neighbor "is more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices" (Mark 12:32-33). They've replaced the God of love with a god of rules. They've made "Christianity" stink in the nostrils of their community.

He answered them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' "For you set aside the commandment of God, and hold tightly to the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and you do many other such things." He said to them, "Full well do you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother;' and, 'He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban, that is to say, given to God;" ' then you no longer allow him to do anything for his father or his mother, making void the word of God by your tradition, which you have handed down. You do many things like this."

Mark 7:6-13

MANY WHO CONSIDER THEMSELVES CHRISTIANS WERE WILLING TO SACRIFICE THE LIVES OF THE ELDERLY

The very people who have for decades been hawking the idea that if we don't outlaw abortion, the next step will be legalized euthanasia for the elderly were the first to take a ho-hum attitude about COVID-19 killing mostly older people. "They were old and going to die soon anyway, so what's the big deal?" HYPOCRITES!

"4 Numbers That Make the Pandemic's Massive Death Toll Sink In"

(https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2021/01/us-covid-19-death-toll/617544/?utm_campaign=the-atlantic&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR3IZpk45sTsuWN0I9JnarsXgZa4JZZtvcVhe1bnqq0J_LJzVHrpakh-fGw)

MANY PROFESSING CHRISTIANS IN AMERICA CONFLATE CHRISTIANITY AND PATRIOTISM

Christianity has everything to do with love for other people, but it has nothing to do with love for one's country. We can't witness to the world by holding the Bible in one hand and the flag in the other.

Those who try to justify patriotism with proof texts from the Old Testament are wasting their time. Old Testament Israel was a unique case. God established Israel as His special nation under the Old Covenant, but that nation was merely a shadow of God's true Israel (the New Covenant *ekklēsia*). The Old Covenant relationship God had with national Israel ended at the Cross. He has no such relationship with any worldly nation today.

We believers "are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). We are a spiritual nation apart from this world, and we have a singleness of purpose to point people to Jesus Christ and His Gospel.

The kingdom of God is not limited by national boundaries. To associate it with love for a particular nation is treasonous toward the kingdom of God. "For our citizenship is in heaven, from where we also wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20).

"The Patriotic Idolatry"

(<https://www.reformation21.org/blog/the-patriotic-idolatry?fbclid=IwAR3T5pSDIHQqB-IJ9IRIt3B4pPAYArtiMFiyD9AHycqJehBeM1SsFc5c1s>)

MANY PROFESSING CHRISTIANS SEE CERTAIN CONSERVATIVE OBJECTIVES (E.G. ENDING ABORTION, OPPOSING LGBTQ RIGHTS AND SAME-SEX MARRIAGE, PROMOTING FAMILY VALUES, DEFENDING GUN RIGHTS) AS THE CORE OF CHRISTIANITY

The faith once delivered to the saints has nothing to do with these issues. The faith that Jesus and His followers taught is about delivering people from sin and condemnation through belief in Jesus' finished atonement on the Cross. How can laying law on people and trying to control their behavior by law have *anything to do with grace*? It cannot! It is contrary to the Gospel, it turns people away from the Gospel, it gives the world a false impression of Christianity, it is a false gospel, and it is apostasy.

If Paul specifically says he would have nothing to do with judging those outside the assembly of the saints (1 Corinthians 5:12), why do Christian Conservatives try to judge the behavior of non-believers through civil law? Could it be that they want to feel safe in a 1950s "Father Knows Best" world? I have news for them. That world never existed except on heavily censored television. It was nice to watch, but it presented a false image of the fallen world in which we live.

Paul walked through the streets of the entirely Pagan Roman Empire. Do you think he saw sinless people leading clean-cut kids in khaki pants and blazers? No, he saw sin all around him. Nevertheless, he still said it was not his place to judge. He knew there was only one answer: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). Remember, Christian Right, such were some of you! (1 Corinthians 6:11).

In Matthew 18, Jesus, beginning in verse 23, tells a parable of a servant whose master forgave him a fortune. But that servant then turned around and wouldn't forgive the small misdeeds of others. Maybe he was a member of the moral majority.

The Heart of the Matter

This is an extremely large and complex issue. Apostasy is apostasy, whether on the left or the right. But I consider the apostasy on the right to be the more dangerous because it is the more alluring and deceptive to potential and present believers (but, of course, the elect cannot be permanently deceived),

and because it presents the more obnoxious distortion of Christianity to the world.

The way to simplify the issue is to get to the heart of the matter. As Christians, we're to have our eyes on Jesus Christ. When we take our eyes off of Him, we sink as quickly as Peter did into the sea (Matthew 14:30). Jesus will raise us back up, but it's best not to take our eyes off Him in the first place. This means not getting distracted by the world, including the issues of the world. The Republican Party uses the Evangelical platform of abortion, gay and trans rights issues, the threat to marriage, family values, etc. as a carrot on a stick to get votes. The devil, in turn, uses these issues to get Christians to take their eyes off Christ. And God used the events of 2020 to clearly expose all of this as apostasy.

As we continue into 2021, the world will do what it does naturally—sin. It's not our job to impose morals on the world or even to tell the world about its sin. That's the work of the Holy Spirit: "When he has come, he will convict the world about sin, about righteousness, and about judgement" (John 16:8).

Our job is to bring Good News to the world by preaching the Solution, the Hope—Jesus Christ. Our job is not to legislate sin out of people or to restore family values or to return America to its Christian roots (it never had them), or to make America great again.

The difference between sinners and saved people isn't how immoral or moral they are. It's whether or not they trust in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior: "Such were some of you, but you were washed. But you were sanctified. But you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11). Contrary to what so many Evangelicals would say, Paul doesn't say, Such were some of you, but you've repented of your sins. He says, "but you were washed...you were sanctified...you were justified." They were sinners, but now those descriptions of sinners (1 Corinthians 6:9-10) can never again describe them because of the work of Jesus Christ.

When we understand this, trying to impose morality by law becomes uncovered as ludicrous. We may be grieved by the world's sin. But the Republican and Evangelical message that promises to work to end these things is a false gospel that directly competes with the true Gospel as the world's hope.

I'm nearly 69 now, and I've seen and been through a lot. This includes once being in a cult and being delivered from it by God's grace. I understand the fog of deception. Yet, I must admit to being surprised by how thoroughly deluded vast numbers of professing Christians were by extreme right-wing

politics and conspiracy theories. If these people ever truly believed the Gospel, they have been bewitched away from it for a time. But, of course, many—probably most—were on shallow ground or among the thorns (Matthew 13:3-8). And when the time came for them to stand firm in the faith, their faith proved to be human-based and withered away or was choked by worldly affairs.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that if we don't get the United States back on track with God's morality, He's going to punish this country. As I've said, the time of God having a special nation ended with the Old Covenant nearly 2,000 years ago. But now His concern is with those who claim to believe on His Son.

I cannot stress enough that this is not about the worldly nation in which we live, but our spiritual nation composed of all our fellow saints around the globe, the true Israel, the spiritual Jews (Romans 2:28-29). Notice that Peter plainly says that we are foreigners and pilgrims who are to be known for our good works. Are you behaving as a foreigner and pilgrim whose heart is in the kingdom of God, or are you behaving as someone whose heart and interest is in the United States?

In the end, God will destroy the United States along with all the nations of the world. But God's kingdom will endure forever. Where is your treasure? Where is your heart? (Matthew 6:21). Remember John's words:

Don't love the world or the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the Father's love isn't in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, isn't the Father's, but is the world's. The world is passing away with its lusts, but he who does God's will remains forever.

1 John 2:15-17

"Be careful that you don't let anyone rob you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the elements of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8).