

# The Apostle Paul & the Signs of the End Times



*"You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times."* 2 Timothy 3:1 NLT

Jesus listed several signs that would indicate the end times in Matthew 24. But the Holy Spirit also revealed to the Apostle Paul several end times signs in 1 Timothy 4:1 and 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

## Central lesson

**God is never caught by surprise by the troubles that come into our lives and the world. He is in control, He has a plan, & Christ is coming again.**

## Specific Signs from the Apostle Paul 1 Timothy 4:1

1. Some will **ABANDON** the faith and follow deceiving (demonic) spirits (1 Timothy 4:1).

*"Now the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some will turn away from the true faith; they will follow deceptive spirits and teachings that come from demons."* NLT

The phrase "**turn away from**" in the Greek text is ἀφίστημι (af-is'-tay-mee) "to lead away, to depart from." It is a **future indicative middle**. The middle voice indicates that they *willfully choose* to walk away from the faith. John MacArthur explains, "An apostate is not someone struggling to believe, but one who **willfully abandons the biblical faith he had once professed... This phrase, then, describes an apostate, a rejector of Christ from within the rank of the church.**" (Commentary, 1 Timothy, p. 147).

The phrase "**the last times**" biblically refers to the period between Christ's **first coming** (some scholars say it started with Christ's resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost) and **second coming** (see 1 John 2:18; 1 Peter 1:20; Hebrews 1:2; 9:26). The departure from the faith will occur between the first and second coming of Christ but will escalate as time moves closer to Christ's return.

The phrase "**deceptive spirits**" indicates that those who abandon the faith are intellectually and spiritually influenced by demonic beings as mentioned in Ephesians 6:12.

People who abandon the faith had a *religion* but not a saving *relationship* with God; They had a *head* faith, but not a *heart* faith; They had not been "born again" as Jesus explained in John 3. People who are genuinely born gain will never turn away from Christ (see 1 John 2:19).

## Do we see examples of people abandoning the faith today?

Dr. John Marriott, adjunct professor in Philosophy and Intercultural Studies at Biola University, states, "**The number of people who once identified as**

**believers but no longer do is increasing at record numbers and record rates... And not just nominal folks. There [are] former pastors, missionaries, worship leaders, and seminary grads."** In 2007, LifeWay Research reported that 70 percent of students lose their faith shortly after entering college. They added that only 35 percent eventually return to faith. Notable people who claim to have de-converted are:

- **George Perdikis** - co-founder of a Christian rock band, The Newsboys.
- **Joshua Harris** - a former evangelical pastor of a megachurch in Maryland who also wrote a best-selling book criticizing modern dating, "*I Kissed Dating Goodbye*." Published in 1997. He announced that he is no longer a Christian and that he is divorcing his wife, Shannon Bonne.
- **Bart D. Ehrman** - is an American New Testament scholar focusing on textual criticism of the New Testament, the historical Jesus, and the origins and development of early Christianity. Ehrman tells how he was a born-again, fundamentalist Christian as a teenager, but became a liberal Christian for 15 years, and later announced that he was an agnostic atheist. He struggled particularly with the philosophical problems of evil and suffering.

## 2 Timothy 3:1-5

*"I You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times..."* NLT

The Greek word for "difficult" is χαλεπός (khal-ep-os) which means "hard (to do or bear), troublesome, harsh, fierce."

2. **People will be lovers of themselves (2 Timothy 3:1-2).**
3. **Lovers of money (2 Timothy 3:2).**
4. **Boastful (2 Timothy 3:2).**
5. **Proud (2 Timothy 3:2).**
6. **Abusive (2 Timothy 3:2).**
7. **Disobedient to their parents (2 Timothy 3:2).**
8. **Ungrateful (2 Timothy 3:2).**
9. **Unholy (2 Timothy 3:2).**
10. **Without love (2 Timothy 3:3).**
11. **Unforgiving (2 Timothy 3:3).**
12. **Slanderous (2 Timothy 3:3).**
13. **Without self-control (2 Timothy 3:3).**
14. **Brutal (2 Timothy 3:3).**
15. **Not lovers of the good (2 Timothy 3:3).**
16. **Treacherous (2 Timothy 3:4).**
17. **Rash (2 Timothy 3:4).**
18. **Conceited (2 Timothy 3:4).**
19. **Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God (2 Timothy 3:4).**
20. **Having a form of godliness but denying its power (2 Timothy 3:5).**

**Conclusion:** God is never caught by surprise by the troubles that come into our lives and the world. He is in control, He has a plan, & Christ is coming again.

**Action Steps:** ► Receive Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ► Invite someone to next Sunday's Bible study. ► Attend a small group. ► Pray for friends that need Jesus. ► Read Revelation 5. *What do you learn about Jesus?*