

Dear Friend,

I have always found the words of Jesus in Luke 21:17 quite sobering: *"And you will be hated by all for My name's sake."* Jesus was speaking in the context of the last days of this world as we have known it. We would all like those words to apply to someone else, at some other time. Yet, in the context of present day events and social trends, it appears that we might be closer to seeing them fulfilled than any of us had anticipated.

I believe this world is beginning its final assault against the lordship of Jesus Christ. Soon laws will be passed and courtroom decisions made declaring anyone who will not conform to this new social order haters of people and propagators of bigotry and division. The good news, however, in all of this is that we have the testimony of history and the inner witness of the Holy Spirit telling us that we will never be left to face this onslaught against truth on our own. *"But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony"* (Luke 21:13).

I encourage you to read Luke 21:7–19. Prepare in your heart to stand courageously for what you know to be right. Whether or not this is the exact time spoken of in this passage, from time to time seasons exactly like it come upon this earth. Jesus will never fail you. Without any doubt in my heart, He is preparing us all to stand. Please remember that it's time to pray!

Yours, in Christ,

Pastor Carter Conlon

## A DAY WHEN MANY WALKED AWAY FROM JESUS

by Carter Conlon

In his letters to the Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul describes the season just prior to the return of Christ as one of great darkness and difficulty—one that will test the fiber of every believer. A world-wide rebellion will be launched against all that is of God. Many false prophets will arise and alternate Christs will be presented to the point where, if it were possible, even the very elect would be deceived. Paul warns them, *"Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first"* (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

What is this great "falling away" that Paul spoke of? First of all, it is important to note that you cannot fall away from something that you were not once close to or at least marginally embracing. This means that Paul was referring to those who were at some point following the Lord—making the warning even more relevant for you and me today. Therefore, we would be wise to take the time to understand what this falling away is and why it happens.

### ■ A FALLING AWAY

In the book of John, we find a clear example, summed up in a single verse: *"From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more"* (John 6:66). Before we look at what exactly caused many of

Jesus' disciples to turn away, it is important to note that earlier in the chapter, it says that *"a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased"* (John 6:2). Many people initially began to follow Jesus with great enthusiasm, drawn by the evidence of what He was doing in the lives of other people. In fact, that is why most people are drawn to Christ in the first place—perhaps through a testimony or by witnessing a changed life.

***There was no talk of making Jesus king until the people saw that their bellies could be filled.***

Soon after this, the Bible tells us that *"Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted. And when they were filled, He said to His disciples, 'Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost.' Therefore they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who*

had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, 'This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.' Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him a king, He departed again to the mountain to Himself alone" (John 6:11–15).

Interestingly, there was no talk of making Jesus king until the people saw that their bellies could be filled by the power of God! They were not interested in making Him king when He healed a leper or touched a blind man. However, when the crowd saw that Jesus could make bread out of nothing, suddenly it was as if everybody got a vision of how wonderful their brand-new, bread-filled lives could be!

Perhaps they began to believe this was a way to escape the curse that Adam brought into the world when he sinned against God. Remember that in the Garden of Eden, the Lord said to Adam, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:17–19). The people knew there was a reason why they had to toil and labor all of their lives. But now there was somebody in their midst who could make bread with no sweat!

I can imagine these people suddenly embracing a new vision: "I don't have to work anymore! I can just make bread by speaking it into existence. I can sell some on the roadside or even send my kids out to do it!"

## **Zeal does not always mean truth. It is not a substitute for the calling God is placing on each of our lives.**

In light of this, we find the temptation that Jesus had undergone in the wilderness to be very pertinent. Satan came to Jesus and said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread" (Matthew 4:3). In other words, "You claim that You have come to redeem humankind and break the curse of sin. If that is true, then command these stones to turn into bread. Break the curse of sin on this world by supernaturally creating bread to fill Your own belly. Use Your authority for Yourself!"

Yet Jesus responded, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). He was saying, "My Father has a divine purpose that He has spoken over My life, and that purpose will be fulfilled by yielding to Him, not by living to satisfy My own desires." Jesus did not give in to the temptation. Yet, sadly, that was not the case for many of His disciples.

### ■ GIVE US BREAD!

After Jesus had multiplied the loaves and fish and the people were ready to make Him king, the Scriptures tell us, "When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus" (John 6:24). They were zealous in seeking Him, just like many Christians are today. If some were to hear that God was doing something supernatural in Baltimore, they would be on the next plane. However, zeal does not always mean truth. Many

false prophets are going to arise in our generation who will be full of enthusiasm and passion. But zeal is not a substitute for the calling of God that He is placing on each of our lives.

"And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, 'Rabbi, when did You come here?' Jesus answered them and said, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled'" (John 6:25–26). In other words, "You are no longer seeking Me for the things that initially drew you. When you first came, you saw Me doing miracles on other people. However, now you are seeking Me only because your belly was filled, and you saw that the power of God could meet your own needs."

## **The work of God is that you look beyond your own needs and realize there is a divine purpose for your life.**

Jesus continued, "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him" (John 6:27). But the people, still after bread, never really get off the topic. They asked Jesus in response, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" (John 6:28). In other words, what they really were asking was, "How can we make bread supernaturally?"

"Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent'" (John 6:29). He was saying,

“The work of God is that you look beyond your own needs and realize that there is a divine purpose for your life. It is a purpose that can be fulfilled only by following Me as I go to a cross—by yielding yourself for the sake of others.”

They said to Jesus, “*What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat’*” (John 6:30–31). Isn’t that amazing? They were still after bread! When Jesus seemed to be dodging their request, they went right back to it again, saying, “Well, give us a sign, just like God did when He gave His people bread in the wilderness. Make some more bread!”

“*Then Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.’ Then they said to Him, ‘Lord, give us this bread always’*” (John 6:32–34). “We want more bread! Fill us, prosper us, make us healthy, and take away all poverty. Give us the power to speak away our troubles so that we can breeze through this life, free from the curse of sin and always satisfied!”

#### ■ A MESSAGE THEY DID NOT WANT TO HEAR

Things began to take a turn as Jesus went on to speak something that the people did not want to hear: “*I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst*” (John 6:35). Jesus was explaining to them, “You are looking for physical bread, but it will not satisfy; it will not give you true strength. You need something more. There is a deeper calling, and with that deeper calling comes divine provision beyond just

food in your cupboard and a good job. I am that provision; I am the bread that the Father has sent down from heaven. If you are willing to partake of Me, your hunger will truly be satisfied. You will enter the calling of God and be met with His provision to accomplish it.”

### *It is the life yielded to the purposes of God that knows the true satisfaction of God.*

“*For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me*” (John 6:38). And this is that calling of God: “Just as I came down to this world, not to be served but to serve, I am sending you out. I am not sending you out to garner and satisfy your own desires; I am sending you out as emissaries of the One who went to a cross and gave His life so that all who believe in Him might have everlasting life.”

At that point, the Bible tells us that “*the Jews then complained about Him, because He said, ‘I am the bread which came down from heaven’*” (John 6:41). I can just hear the complaining beginning: “We are here for bread, but He is trying to draw us to Himself. We are ready to make Him our king, but shouldn’t a king be solely focused on meeting the needs of subjects as loyal as we are?” Essentially, this was the deal they wanted to make with Jesus: You give us bread; You give us the power to escape all our trials; You give us authority and provision; You do things our way, and we will make You king. But do not talk to us about needing something more!”

Of course, their reaction did not stop Jesus from continuing in truth,

“*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever*” (John 6:53–58).

### *Put a supernatural love in my heart for the lost, and give me the strength to reach out to those around me.*

And so the people were offended. It was at this point that many turned and walked away, for it was a message that did not appeal to them. It does not mean they abandoned religion; they simply walked with Jesus no more. They went back to trying to find another way to make bread, abandoning the One who was the Living Bread.

#### ■ THE CALLING OF GOD

On the other hand, to those who could hear, Jesus was explaining, “Here is My purpose: My life is to be given for all humanity, and you are called to follow Me. Yet, unless you partake of the victory that I am about to win for you, letting My blood cover you; unless you come with a fully yielded heart, desiring to live for Me, you will not be able to fulfill the calling that is before you.”

It is the life yielded to the purposes of God that knows the true satisfaction of God. However, this calling is so deep that we need the Holy Spirit in order to hear and yield to it. Jesus Himself said, *“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him”* (John 6:44). We all need the grace of God to respond, for everything in our fallen nature will resist this calling and instead drive us to continue pursuing our own bread and comfort. That is why so many powerless churches have been raised in this nation, with false prophets leading people to an easier path than the one that God has ordained for us. Sadly, they will soon find that what they have been seeking will not be sufficient to get them through the days that we are all going to face, and many will fall away.

***Make no mistake about it—living for the purposes of God will not be easy, particularly as the days grow darker.***

But take comfort, for Jesus continued in that same verse, *“and I will raise him up at the last day”* (John 6:44). And so as we are living in the last days, this ought to be our heart’s cry: “Oh, God, draw me to Yourself and raise me up! Deliver me from self-focus. Deliver me from simply reading the Bible to see what I can get for my own belly. Help me to look beyond living for myself. Help me

to be willing to yield my own plans and dreams to Your call on my life. Put a supernatural love in my heart for the lost, and give me the strength to reach out to those all around me who need help.”

Make no mistake about it—living for the purposes of God and the benefit of others will not be easy, particularly as the days grow darker. However, as we ask Him, God will allow us to partake of this bread of heaven. He will give us vision, life, direction, power and purpose—and we will discover what it means to live a life that is truly satisfying!

Carter Conlon  
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### CARTER CONLON

Carter Conlon is senior pastor of Times Square Church, where he has been on the pastoral staff since 1994.

### TIMES SQUARE CHURCH

Times Square Church was founded in 1987 by Pastor David Wilkerson, author of *“The Cross and the Switchblade.”* It is an interdenominational church located in the heart of New York City.

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### WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday	10:00AM	3:00PM	6:00PM
Tuesday	7:00PM	Prayer Service	
Friday	7:00PM	The Gate*	

\*Youth and Young Adult Service

### Live Webcast:

All our Sunday and Tuesday services can be watched live and replayed for seven days on our website.

**tscnyc.org**

This newsletter is an edited version of **“A DAY WHEN MANY WALKED AWAY FROM JESUS,”** a sermon given on **April 24, 2016** in the sanctuary of Times Square Church in New York City. Other sermons are available by visiting our website at **tscnyc.org**. You are welcome to make additional copies of this sermon for free distribution to friends. However, for all other forms of reproduction or electronic transmission existing copyright laws apply. This sermon cannot be posted on any website or webpage without permission from Times Square Church. Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references are from the New King James Version.