

Prophecy in Motion

Lesson 2: The Great Apostasy

The Bible teaches us that prior to the second coming of Christ, there will be a falling away from the faith. Many believers will abandon essential truths and they will turn to deceptive teachings. The Word of God prophesies a rebellion against the truth that will pave the way for the emergence of the Antichrist. Today we see mainstream churches that are deviating away from the foundational beliefs of scripture. These churches will make up what is called the Apostate Church. The Apostate Church is a false church that will be characterized by cultural ideology and immoral positions. This Apostasy is a precursor to the appearing of the “man of sin,” who is the Antichrist.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 NIV - Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter—asserting that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.

A. The Great Departure

1. The Greek word translated “rebellion,” is *apostasía*, meaning a departure. It means a defection from the truth.
2. Before Christ returns, people will abandon a once-held position of faith. Those who were entrusted with the truth will depart from it.
3. There will be a Last Days makeover of beliefs about God. People will re-make God into their own idea of what they believe God should be.

Romans 1:21-23 AMP - Because when they knew and recognized Him as God, they did not honor and glorify Him as God or give Him thanks. But instead they became futile and godless in their thinking [with vain imaginings, foolish reasoning, and stupid speculations] and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools [professing to be smart, they made simpletons of themselves]. And by them the glory and majesty and excellence of the immortal God were exchanged for and represented by images, resembling mortal man and birds and beasts and reptiles.

"There is a difference between the God we think we believe in and the God who actually exists."

~A. W. Tozer

In the Last Days age of Apostasy, people will have evolving beliefs about God that are not rooted in Who God truly is.

4. Those who depart will give heed to demons.

1 Timothy 4:1 AMP - But the [Holy] Spirit distinctly and expressly declares that in latter times some will turn away from the faith, giving attention to deluding and seducing spirits and doctrines that demons teach.

When there is a departure from truth, there is a turning to deceiving spirits and demonic doctrines. To turn from the faith is to open oneself up to new ideas and revelations from the spirit world.

5. Apostasy is fueled by seducing spirits who manipulate the minds of the people.

Seducer - sorcerer; enchanter; imposter

These seducers are people who have been deceived, and they are deceiving others by their persuasive speech and demonic beliefs. Paul warned Timothy that will intensify in the Last Days.

2 Timothy 3:13 AMP - But wicked men and imposters will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and leading astray others and being deceived and led astray themselves.

B. The Apostate Church

2 Thessalonians 2:3 AMP - Let no one deceive or beguile you in any way, for that day will not come except the apostasy comes first [unless the predicted great falling away of those who have professed to be Christians has come], and the man of lawlessness (sin) is revealed, who is the son of doom (of perdition).

1. Apostasy creeps in slowly.

The Great Apostasy is a result of a change in the spiritual climate of a church. People begin to change what they believe about God and the Bible. The influence of a godless culture begins to influence righteous values and godly principles.

Paul's warning to Timothy was about a pervasive self-centeredness, producing a very sinful mindset in the church. No conviction.

2 Timothy 3:4-5 AMP - [They will be] treacherous [betrayers], rash, [and] inflated with self-conceit. [They will be] lovers of sensual pleasures and vain amusements more than and rather than lovers of God.

For [although] they hold a form of piety (true religion), they deny and reject and are strangers to the power of it [their conduct belies the genuineness of their profession]. Avoid [all] such people [turn away from them].

2. Selfishness breeds corruption.

The selfishness that permeates society is prophesied to bring corruption into the church. Notice that verse 3 says they have a form of religion, but their lifestyle is contrary to truth and righteousness.

2 Timothy 3:5 NKJV - having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

3. The Apostate Church has a form of godliness.

The Apostate Church will be presented as the real thing. It will have an outward display of spirituality, but it's all for show. It will lack the transforming power of Christ. This Apostate Church denies the true gospel, and it is marked by moral decay.

4. Apostasy is a defection from Truth.

Apostasy is a falling away from the Biblical faith. It is a withdrawal, a defection, a forsaking. For an individual, apostasy means a turning away from God and one's relationship with Him.

Hebrews 3:12-14 NKJV - Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.

This is a warning to believers to be aware of any change in their heart condition, that would cause a departure. *Departing* here means to desert, to withdraw, or to fall away.

5. Jesus warned about apostasy.

Matthew 24:10-13 NASB - At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

Even Jesus warned His disciples about the great falling away from the faith. Notice that false prophets are key players in this falling away from the faith.

Jeremiah 14:14 NKJV - And the Lord said to me, "The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart.

6. Apostates introduce the Antichrist Spirit.

Jude 1:4 AMP - For certain men have crept in stealthily [gaining entrance secretly by a side door]. Their doom was predicted long ago, ungodly (impious, profane) persons who pervert the grace (the spiritual blessing and favor) of our God into lawlessness *and* wantonness *and* immorality, and disown *and* deny our sole Master and Lord, Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).

Once again, we see the religious aspect of apostasy. They pervert the grace of God - they invent their own idea of Who God is and what He's like.

This falling away is preparing the world for the appearance of the Antichrist, the man of sin, or the man of lawlessness. Notice the connection of the lawlessness ,or the immorality, of the Apostate Church to the man of sin.

2 Thessalonians 2:3 AMP - Let no one deceive or beguile you in any way, for that day will not come except the apostasy comes first [unless the predicted great falling away of those who have professed to be Christians has come], and the man of lawlessness (sin) is revealed, who is the son of doom (of perdition).

7. The Apostate Church is demonically influenced.
In Revelation 17, John portrays an Apostate Church. It is illustrated as a harlot because it professes loyalty to Christ, but it cleaves to idols and a false religious system. It's the devil's church.

Revelation 17:1-2 AMP - One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls then came and spoke to me, saying, Come with me! I will show you the doom (sentence, judgment) of the great harlot (idolatress) who is seated on many waters, [she] with whom the rulers of the earth have joined in prostitution (idolatry) and with the wine of whose immorality (idolatry) the inhabitants of the earth have become intoxicated.

C. Called to Contend for the Faith

Jude 1:3 NKJV - Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

1. We must contend vigorously.
Believers are called to remain committed to the true gospel of Christ. He says that we have been entrusted with gospel truth. To contend for the faith means to stay connected to Jesus Christ.
2. Live life based upon conviction.
Faith is expressed by believing and living the Word of God.

3. Remain in pursuit of Christ.

We must continue to pursue a life of holiness and righteousness in Christ. Don't ever allow yourself to be moved away from the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:22-23 AMP - Yet now has [Christ, the Messiah] reconciled [you to God] in the body of His flesh through death, in order to present you holy and faultless and irreproachable in His [the Father's] presence.

[And this He will do] provided that you continue to stay with and in the faith [in Christ], well-grounded and settled and steadfast, not shifting or moving away from the hope [which rests on and is inspired by] the glad tidings (the Gospel), which you heard and which has been preached [as being designed for and offered without restrictions] to every person under heaven, and of which [Gospel] I, Paul, became a minister.