

LESSON 12



APOSTASY OF THE CHURCH

Scripture Texts: 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Peter 2:1-2; Jude 3

God's Word is truth. Because it is, it tells of coming failures as well as successes. God knows the future. When our lesson Scriptures were written, the apostasy was future. Now we can look at it from the standpoints of prophesy, and of history, and as it is happening today. Apostasy is in two forms: (1) a rejection of the authority of the Word of God and (2) a rejection of Holy Spirit rule. The first opens the door for any kind of false doctrine to enter. The second allows the setting up of human rule in its many degrees. The great apostasy predicted in our lesson Scripture is the result of both phases of sinful error.

MEMORY VERSE: *"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."*

Hebrews 2:1

A Falling Away

Second Thessalonians 2:3-7 The early church expected Christ to return soon. Paul wrote that **a falling away** must come before **that day** when Christ returns. He did not want the saints to be discouraged and give up faith at seeing some of the church turn away from the truth. This was to be a great and extensive apostasy, bringing to the world a man-made system of religion so wicked as to be called **that man of sin . . . the son of perdition**. The spirit motivating this system originates in hell. **Who opposeth**—sets himself against God and His truth—**and exalteth himself above . . . God** takes honor belonging to God, changes God's Word.

Paul said, **the mystery of iniquity**—the secret evil—**doth already work**. It had begun to grow, but was not yet seen, nor revealed. Something was holding it back. That force was the clear truth of the Gospel of Christ. When that hindrance was removed, the evil system would **be revealed**—come to power and be seen. The apostasy of the church allowed it to come forth (1 John 2:18-19).

8-10 **Then shall that Wicked be revealed**, but it will not continue forever. The Lord will destroy it with **the spirit of his mouth**, and **the brightness of his coming**. This is the only method for the spirit of apostasy to be revealed in our day. **With all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish**—poor, deluded, lost souls are held in its sin. Had they received **the love of the truth**, they could have been saved. All need to know the truth.

Watch

First Timothy 4:1-3 **The Spirit speaketh**—God's Word, not Paul's. **In the latter times**—then it was future. Now we are living near the end of time. There was to be a departure **from the faith**, a turning from the true Gospel. Instead of following the true Bible, they would follow **seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils**. **Speaking lies in hypocrisy**—pretending to be true. **Having their conscience seared with a hot iron**—taught to override their sense of right and wrong. The same Gospel-hot iron that smooths out the wrinkles of the saints' garments, if not allowed to do so, will sear the conscience. In this experience of being seared, the nerves of natural feeling are destroyed. In Matthew 13:8 we read of a condition of how the falling away begins. The seed planted in the same type of soil, brought forth at first **an hundredfold**, then **sixtyfold**, then **thirtyfold**. The mystery of iniquity was already working.

This is a good way to recognize a falling away in our day—good fruit becomes less and less.

The world is the field; the church is in the center of that field; this is where the wheat is planted. With all the rest of the world open to him, the devil desires to sow his tares here with the wheat. He wanted to destroy this hundredfold harvest, and he did in the early church.

One cannot fall from a height he has never attained. The fact that they fell proves that they were living on a lower spiritual plane than before. They wanted to be called the church, but did not want to pay the full price. This is apostasy. To refuse light after beginning to walk with God causes one to take on another spirit, that of apostasy—a spiritual blindness, darkness from which few escape. It takes a divine work to lift one to the exalted position of holiness, and it takes the same divine work to keep him from falling—complete obedience. Any spot on one's garment defiles one, rendering him unworthy to walk with Christ in white. We must be in the light to watch (Revelation 3:2-6). The sad thing about apostasy is that individuals know there is only one way, one standard to maintain victory over sin and evil, but they toss it aside and attempt to hold the line by human works. Few ever return to their former state after they fall from truth. This is because they turn down the only remedy for being healed of the trouble. Consider the following example that proves this point: If one had the only remedy to heal terminal diseases and offered it to one dying of such a disease, and that person refused to accept it, we see a picture of what takes place when people apostatize and do not get back. They refuse the only cure provided, the complete Word of God.

The Remedy

Second Peter 2:1-2 **There shall be false teachers among you.** This Scripture should cause us to examine ourselves. Are any false teachers **privily**—slyly, gradually, unnoticed—bringing in **damnable heresies**? God through Peter tells us **many shall follow** these false doctrines. Because of that, **the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.**

Jude 3 **Earnestly contend for the faith.** You do not have to contend unless someone is trying to take something away. Paul kept the faith (1 Timothy 4:7-16). Our only hope of escape from the spirit of apostasy is to **buy** the truth, **learn** the truth, **love** the truth, and **live** the truth—no compromise. Full obedience to Bible doctrine and Holy Spirit rule is sufficient to bring the Church of God through. Shall we escape? We must!

JUST A THOUGHT

**It is dangerous to have more light than
we are walking in.**