

GNITN

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The Great Falling Away: Truth, Apostasy, And The Last Days

A Controversial Topic

Usually when faced with topics that engender a wide spectrum of explanations I advise us to take the simplest approach to it. People are prone to conspiracies or wildly exaggerated explanations for just about anything. The story of a semi stuck under a bridge that brought teams of engineers to the scene to figure how to move it illustrates my point. After hours of ideas a young child looked at it and suggested taking air out of the tires which actually worked. A combination of curiosity and unbounded imagination can take many down roads that lead to nowhere when going back to basics will suffice. When it comes to Bible prophecy we often tend to think we know what topics mean first and then go to the Word to make it fit. If we think Christians are going through the Tribulation we'll discard the idea of a pretribulation Rapture. And if we do that well anything that fits our timeline of events will be how we interpret end times happening. I could take a deep dive on many of those things, but for this lesson I'm only going to look at one sign of the last days and that is what the Apostle Paul brings up when trying to settle down the Thessalonians who thought they missed the Rapture and were living in the Tribulation. In **2 Thessalonians 2** he told them this:

Now, dear brothers and sisters, let us clarify some things about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and how we will be gathered to meet him. 2 Don't be so easily shaken or alarmed by those who say that the day of the Lord has already begun. Don't believe them, even if they claim to have had a spiritual vision, a revelation, or a letter supposedly from us. 3 Don't be fooled by what they say. For that day will not come until there is a great rebellion against God and the man of lawlessness is revealed—the one who brings destruction. 4 He will exalt himself and defy everything that people call god and every object of worship. He will even sit in the temple of God, claiming that he himself is God. ([2 Thess 2:1-4, NLT](#))

The term in verse 3 is also translated as “the great falling away,” the “apostasy,” or a “rebellion.” When it happens is also open for debate, too.

Just The Basics

A little word study tells us that this word *apostasy* can mean a few things. The only two times the words shows up in the New Testament is in **2 Thessalonians** and the other in **Acts 21:21**. In the original language it is the word *apostasia* (ap-os-tas-ee'-ah). According to the [commentary](#) from the *Bible Hub* we learn this:

Beyond its root sense of departure, the term carries the weight of a conscious, culpable turning away from divinely revealed truth. In Scripture it is never a neutral change of opinion; it is a moral revolt against the covenant Lord. Hence English renderings such as “apostasy,” “rebellion,” or “forsake” all capture aspects of its gravity.

This isn't a passive falling away but an intentional rebellion from the truth. It isn't simply not going to church or not reading your Bible, rather a loathing and hostile rejection of the truth so profound that Paul and others warn us to recognize it and strongly guard against it. And it would be easily seen in the last days as a sign that the Tribulation and its leader the Antichrist was close at hand. So, what are the prevailing views of this rebellious spirit?

Massive Abandonment

The most common views are that it is large-scale desertion of the faith by professing Christians rejecting biblical truth with an overall departure from morality in the whole of society. There will be churches who will compromise doctrine and side with a society that becomes increasingly hostile to the Gospel. Other verses help us to see what will happen:

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... (1 Tim 4:1, AMPC)

For the time is coming when [people] will not tolerate (endure) sound and wholesome instruction, but, having ears itching [for something pleasing and gratifying], they will gather to themselves one teacher after another to a considerable number, chosen to satisfy their own liking and to foster the errors they hold, 4 And will turn aside from hearing the truth and wander off into myths and man-made fictions.

(2 Tim 4:3-4, AMPC)

And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. ¹¹ And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. ¹² And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. (Matt 24:10-12, AKJV)

Under this view, the great falling away includes the rejection of sound doctrine and compromise with error. There will be a cooling love for God. And we'll see moral corruption, religious deception and abandoning Christ under pressure. In this folding there will then be turning to false teachings and teachers that will tell us what will not only please but keep us from the persecution that drove us to rebel. Add to this that there will be a moral collapse and rejection of biblical order and you have the recipe for a near total collapse of the world before the Tribulation, a culture of lawlessness preparing the world for the Antichrist. Since the spirit behind this is one of the coming Antichrist it will pave the way for him to lead a society who already rejected Jesus long ago.

It's A Process

Now that we've laid the groundwork for this apostasy, let's explore how it can happen. You see this will be so dangerous. It often does not begin with open denial. It begins with drift, compromise, and a tolerance for error. We may expect this progression to be overt and blatant; however, it can be more subtle making it even more deadly. It happens when we replace biblical truth with cultural opinion, often twisting and contorting the Word of God to fit what art, music, and literature is pushing. We will see many keeping the Christian language while denying the true biblical meaning of the words. Terms like repentance and holiness will be rejected altogether. Individuals will be seen following signs, wonders, or spiritual experiences without testing them by Scripture. This is not to say that these are all wrong. We certainly don't want to quench the Spirit, but we need to be careful to not be led astray with superficial experiences that God has nothing to do with. There will be legions of people preferring teachers who comfort the flesh instead of confronting sin. Then people will treat Jesus as optional rather than Lord. This will all happen because, as Paul also tells us, people will not *receive the love of the truth*. That is important. The issue is not merely intellectual confusion. The issue is a heart problem. People do not just fail to find the truth. They refuse to love it. So, the falling away is deeply tied to rejecting truth, embracing lies, being spiritually seduced and accepting false religion or false Christs.

Is It Happening Now?

I think it is. The whole *deconstructing your faith* movement is a good example of this falling away. The list of famous believers who are no longer Christians or seriously questioning Christianity is getting longer and longer. It includes people like Joshua Harris, Jon Steingard, Bart Campolo, Derek Webb, Rhett McLaughlin, and Link Neal. If you don't recognize them, don't worry, I didn't either until I searched for them. They even have a term for themselves, exvangelicals. They grew up as believers or went to church as children or teens and began questioning doctrines, interpretations of scripture, church authority, cultural practices, or moral teachings they were taught. For some people, deconstruction leads to rebuilding their faith with revised beliefs, while for others it results in rejecting parts of Christianity or leaving the faith entirely. The concept is often compared to taking apart a structure to inspect its foundation—evaluating which beliefs still seem true or meaningful and which ones the person no longer accepts. I'm all for testing what you believe, but the vast majority of people who do this don't end up with stronger faith and a closer walk with Jesus and love for the Bible. All too often they move away from God while still claiming to be Christians. And sadly, they were taught incorrectly about key doctrines and instead of digging into the Bible to correct them, asking Holy Spirit to lead them into all truth, they let even worse teachers tear apart their faith. They allowed culture to influence them rather than listening to on fire teachers like Leonard Ravenhill, David Wilkerson who would challenge them to get closer to Jesus not farther away. I could give you more examples, but this one makes the point.

Good Advice

Rather than let us wallow in despair at the sad state of affairs all around us I will conclude with what we need to do. Paul's warning about the falling away was meant to steady believers, not frighten them. His point is that Christians should respond to end-times deception by staying rooted in Scripture, loving the truth even when it is difficult, testing all teaching carefully, enduring sound doctrine instead of chasing what is easier or more popular, staying spiritually watchful against compromise, and remaining faithful to Christ through it all. The passage is not a call to panic but it was given so believers are not shaken by error or drawn away from the Lord. Believers are also called to stay watchful against compromise and drift, while remaining faithful to Christ in both belief and obedience. So, we need a call to stability, discernment, perseverance, and steady devotion to the Lord, now more than ever. Are you struggling with your faith or know someone who is? Rather than spending endless hours listening to others tell you what to do, how about simply praying to God and letting Him untangle things. Then spend time reading the Bible, not what people say about it. You'll be amazed what Holy Spirit will reveal to you. The KISS rule applies, you know Keep It Simple, Saints? It really does apply.