

## **The Last Days Apostasy of the Church** 2 Timothy 3:1

### **Intro:**

2 Tim. 3:1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come.

1 Tim. 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.

**The Christian Post:** David Jeremiah says apostasy among pastors a sign of ‘great falling away’ ahead of End Times.

Influential Pastor David Jeremiah has voiced his concerns about the seemingly increasing number of pastors and churches straying from biblical truth, warning that this trend indicates the “falling away” Scripture prophesies ahead of the End Times.

He said, “one of the things the Bible says is that during the time when we’re anticipating the rapture, there will be what they call the falling away, the apostasy, is what theologians call it. And if you study that, what it teaches is that there will be a time when people who once embraced the truth will fall away from the truth, and it will be an epidemic of this. Hardly a month goes by where you don’t hear somebody that you thought was straight and going in the right way and doing the right things and teaching the right truth, and now they don’t believe this anymore, or they’ve gotten in trouble, and they’re no longer in the ministry anymore.”

“The enemy is at work. The Bible says Satan goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. And he doesn’t devour our bodies. Obviously, he devours our influence. ... A lot of young guys who I know are saying, ‘I don’t believe there’s anything wrong with abortion,’ or ‘I don’t believe there’s anything wrong with homosexuality’ or all of these other issues. They once did, but now they don’t. That’s the falling away. That’s what the Bible says is going to happen, and it’s happening.”

First we will define apostasy. Then we will list its characteristics.

### **Definition:**

ἀποστασία (apostasia)

ἀπο “away from”

στασία “to stand”

Lit: “to stand away from”

It means “to depart from.” Typically to depart from known truth or from doctrine that was once acknowledged as truth.

Apostasy is not about conditions in the world. The world has no truth to depart from. It is about conditions in the church or within the ranks of Christendom or Christianity.

### **Characteristics:**

**Characteristic #1:** Apostasy is a sign of the last days or a sign of the end times.

Many signs of the last days are in relation to the world during the tribulation after the church is removed. Events today could be setting the stage for events that take place during the tribulation.

While there are many signs in the world that could be setting the stage for the tribulation, we should remember that the sign of apostasy is related to the church itself.

On the one hand, apostasy has been a tool the enemy has used throughout history to deceive God's people. But the apostle Paul tells us that apostasy will grow worse and worse as God gets ready to wrap up His program with the church.

2 Tim. 3:13, "evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."

The rapid growth of apostasy is a sign of the last days.

Postmillennialism claims that the world will get better and better until it is "Christianized." But this is in direct contradiction to what Paul wrote. He did not say that evil men will become less and less. The harsh fact is that two world wars dashed the hopes of Postmillennialism. Yet Postmillennialism is making a come-back today in various forms. For example, Dominion Theology; Theonomy or Christian Reconstructionism; and Kingdom Now Theology.

As the church age is getting ready to wrap up:

- Don't look for it going out on a note of optimism.
- Don't look for the church going out on a blaze of glory.
- Don't look for the church succeeding in establishing the kingdom of God on the earth.

If you toss a load of bricks off the back of a truck, would you expect to find a pile of bricks stacked neatly or a bunch of bricks scattered all over the road?

The second law of thermal dynamics: things proceed from order to chaos. This is one reason that evolution cannot be true. This is true in the spiritual realm. The church will be marked by a progressive deterioration at the end of the church age.

Matthew 13 contains a number of parables which characterize this church age that we are currently living in. These parables can be outlined like this:

- (1) The Sower: There will be a sowing of the Word throughout the church age.
- (2) The Wheat and Tares: The sowing of the Word will be faked by a false counter sowing.
- (3) The Mustard Seed: Christendom will experience massive outward growth.
- (4) The Leaven: But it will experience doctrinal corruption.
- (5) The Earthen Treasure: The Lord will gain for Himself a peculiar treasure from among Israel.
- (6) The Pearl of Great Price: He will also gain for Himself a unique treasure from the church.

(7) The Dragnet: The age will end in judgment with the unbelievers being excluded from entering the Millennial kingdom. In contrast, believers will enter into the blessings of Messiah's reign.

Mt. 13:33 He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough." (NIV)

Mt. 16:6, And Jesus said to them, "Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

The yeast spreads through the dough. Christendom will experience internal corruption to greater and greater degrees as the church age comes to a conclusion.

2 Tim. 3:13, "But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."

Apostasy is a characteristic of the church in the last days.

Each dispensation ends in failure. The church age is no different.

**Characteristic #2:** Apostasy is a massive New Testament subject.

Jesus predicted it in the Matthew 13 parables.

Paul predicted it in Acts 20.

Acts 20:29-31 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

Paul's letters deals with warnings about apostasy. It is the second most frequently dealt with subject in the letters of Paul.

John warns about apostasy in Revelation. Five of the seven churches are in an apostate state.

Galatians, Colossians, Hebrews, 2 Peter, Jude and 1 John dealt with false teaching, doctrinal errors and apostasy.

**Characteristic #3:** Apostasy impacts every major doctrine.

**The Faith:** 1 Tim. 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.

**God:** Jude 1:4 For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who ... deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Christ and His Death:** 2 Pet. 2:1 But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.

**Christ's Return:** 2 Pet. 3:3-4 knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."

**Sound Doctrine:** 2 Tim. 4:3-4 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

**The Resurrection:** 2 Tim. 2:16-18 But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.

**God as Creator:** 2 Pet. 3:5 For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water.

**Characteristic #4:** Apostasy happens inside the church.

Act 20:29-31 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

Jude 4 For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

The American Bible Society released the results of a startling survey. Roughly fifty percent of American adults reported reading Scripture at least three times a year from 2011 to 2021. In 2022, that number declined to thirty-nine percent. That means twenty-six million Americans stopped reading the Bible in 2022. Even more alarming than this drop in Bible reading is the idea that a Bible reader is described as one who reads his or her Bible three times per year.

In 2022, LifeWay Research conducted a survey. They wanted to know how many evangelicals agreed with the following statement: “The Bible contains helpful accounts of ancient myths but is not literally true.”

In 2020, 15% of evangelicals agreed with that statement.

In 2022, 26% of evangelicals agreed with that statement.

We are in theological freefall, not just in America, but among so-called evangelicals as well.

Brian McLaren

Was raised in the Brethren Assembly.

“I don’t think we’ve got the gospel right yet. What does it mean to be saved? None of us have arrived at orthodoxy.”

“Is getting individual souls into heaven the focal point of the Gospel? I’d have to say no, for any number of reasons. Don’t you think God is concerned about saving the whole world? It is the redemption of the world, the stars, the animals, the planets, the whole show.”

“The church latched on to that old doctrine of original sin like a dog to a stick, and before you knew it, the whole gospel got twisted around it. Instead of being God’s big message of saving love for the whole world, the gospel became a little bit of secret information on how to solve the pesky legal problem of original sin.”

Rob Bell

Pastored a Bible Church. Sherry Karum used to babysit his kids.

*Love Wins:* At the heart of this perspective is the belief that, given enough time, everybody will turn to God and find themselves in the joy and peace of God’s presence. The love of God will melt every hard heart, and even the most “depraved sinners” will eventually give up their resistance and turn to God...At the center of Christian tradition since the first church have been a number who insist that history is not tragic, hell is not forever, and love, in the end, wins and all will be reconciled to God.

Andy Woods: Don’t look for apostasy in the world. Look for it in books written by Christians. Look for it from pulpits occupied by so-called “men of God.” Look for it in so-called Christian schools. Look for it in so-called Christian seminaries.

Dr. John Walvoord: In all of my study of church history, here’s how it always works. Somebody gets into a position of teaching and they start to say things that aren’t quite right, a little off, and typically what happens is Satan puts that person in that position at a time when the school has very weak leadership and a non-aggressive president. And nobody really challenges what this faculty member is saying because after all, they have the PhD from Europe so they know everything, right? And as that unchallenged person begins to promote their ideas another faculty member gets contaminated and another one, and another one. And eventually what you have is a whole school, if you’re not careful, has moved away from its theological position.

DTS Whose Who of Bible Scholars:

- Griffith Thomas
- Harry Ironside
- Dwight Pentecost
- Merrill Unger
- Charles Ryrie
- Robert Lightner
- Howard Hendricks
- Chuck Swindoll

Darrell Bock

- Senior Research Professor of New Testament studies at DTS
- PhD from Scotland’s University of Aberdeen
- Co-Author of the leading book promoting Progressive Dispensationalism.
- Zane Hodges: “Darrell has told me both in person and in writing that his position is “soft lordship” salvation--a view that would have been rejected by the founder and first president of Dallas Seminary, Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer.”

**Characteristic #5:** Apostasy knows no limits.

You say to yourself, “Professor \_\_\_\_\_ would be the last person ever to be involved in apostasy.” Yet, they are often the ones leading the charge.

Examples from scripture:

- Aaron and the golden calf incident.

Ex 32:1 Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, “Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.”

- Jonathan, the son of Gershom.

Judges 17 and 18 is a description of idolatry coming into the land of Israel for the very first time after Joshua had conquered the land. This is a description of how idolatry enters the land of Israel. It enters the land of Israel through a wandering Levite whose identity is not given until the end of the story.

Judges 18:30 Then the children of Dan set up for themselves the carved image; and Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land.

Who is Jonathan?

Jonathan was the son of Gershom. Gershom was the son of Manasseh (KJV, NKJV, NASB).

If you check out the footnote to the NKJV & NASB you will see that Jonathan actually was actually the grandson of Moses.

The ESV, HCSB, NET, NIV, & NLT all translate Manasseh as Moses. Why did the scribes write Manasseh rather than Moses? Possibly to safeguard the reputation of Moses by not associating him with his idolatrous grandson.

The Massoretic Text inserts a suspended nun, “נ, ן,” in the name of Moses (משה), causing it to be read מנשה, Manasseh, for the purpose, according to tradition, of disguising the name out of respect for the revered Lawgiver.

Who brought idolatry into the land after the conquest of Joshua? It was none other than Moses’ grandson.

Gershom was the son of Moses. Jonathan is Moses grandson.

Who brought idolatry into the land of Israel for the very first time after Joshua conquered the land? Who brought such a spiritual and theological problem into Israel that it was literally a thorn in their flesh for 800 years, to the point where God had to bring discipline on them 800 years later? Who started the ball rolling? It was none other than Moses’ grandson.

- The Ephesian Church.

Rev. 2: 4 But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

- The church at Ephesus was planted by Paul.
- Priscilla and Aquila ministered there.
- Timothy became the pastor of the church at Ephesus.
- John became bishop over Ephesus.
- Ephesus is the key church that's vibrant and on fire in the book of Acts.

A.D. 52—On Paul's second mission journey, he visited Ephesus after leaving Corinth, and evidently planted the church there (Acts 18:19).

A.D. 96—The Book of Revelation was written.

After 44 years Jesus was on the outside knocking at the church door.

Not Ephesus! Yes, Ephesus. Not Jonathan! Yes, Jonathan. Not Aaron! Yes, Aaron. There is no limit to apostasy, there is no limit to who can become involved in apostasy.

Examples from today:

- Harvard University

The Rules of Harvard: "Let every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to consider well the main end of his life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life (John 17:3) and therefore to lay Christ in the bottom as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning. And seeing the Lord only giveth wisdom, let everyone seriously set himself by prayer in secret to seek it of Him (Prov. 2, 3). Everyone shall exercise himself in reading the Scriptures twice a day that he shall be ready to give such an account of his proficiency therein." (The Rules of Harvard University; 1636)

Harvard was "it" in colonial America. Harvard was where ministers were trained to be preachers and teachers of the gospel. Many of our Founding Fathers that believed in the Scripture and the Bible were educated at Harvard. Today there is not a hint or trace of Biblicism or evangelicalism at Harvard, other than a few things engraved in the wall by a prior generation. And Harvard has apostatized.

Had you predicted this in 1636, you would have been a laughing stock.

- Frances Beckwith (ETS)

The Evangelical Theological Society is the leading think-tank among conservative Bible scholars in the world.

Frances Beckwith was president of ETS in 2007.

Beckwith was probably considered the top conservative Bible scholar in the world at that time.

Beckwith grew up as a Roman Catholic. Later in his life he converted to a Protestant. In the middle of his tenure as president of ETS, he went back to Catholicism.

**Characteristic #6:** Apostasy can happen very quickly.

Gal 1:6-7 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

ταχέως (tacheōs): quickly, shortly

NASB: so quickly

It only took between 6-12 months for the Galatians to turn away from the gospel.

Ex. 32:7-8 And the LORD said to Moses, "Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"

Moses was on the mountain for 40 days.

Rev. 2: 4 But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

Revelation was written A.D. 95. Paul's first missionary journey was A.D. 44. That's when the church in Ephesus began (50 years). Paul's second letter to Timothy, who was pastor of the Ephesian church was A.D. 67 (less than 30 years).

**Characteristic #7:** Apostasy is satanically orchestrated.

2 Cor. 11:3 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

1 Tim. 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

**Characteristic #8:** Apostasy is destructive.

Acts 20:29, I know that after my departure **savage wolves** will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

1 Tim. 1:19 ...having faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected concerning the faith, having suffered **shipwreck**.

2 Tim. 2:16-18 But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like **cancer**. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.

**Characteristic #9:** Apostasy makes life difficult for the people of God.

2 Tim. 3:12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

Unfortunately, much of the persecution comes from within the church.

**Characteristic #10:** Apostasy impacts those who have not taken preventive measures.

The last words of a church asleep at the wheel: "I didn't see that coming."

Apostasy is inevitable. Paul does not tell us how to stop apostasy. He does warn us about apostasy. He does tell us how we not to be swept away by the coming tide of apostasy.



No action is action. The current will pull you downstream unless you take action. There is a war on for your mind, both in the church and outside the church. If you are not in God's Word, you're going to be pulled in a direction you don't want to go.

1 Thes. 5:21 Test all things; hold fast what is good.

Rom. 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Eph. 6:11 Put on the full armor of God.

Are you dressed for success?

Jude 3 Contend earnestly for the faith.

Latin proverb, Praemonitus, praemunitus "to be forewarned is to be forearmed"

Miguel Cervantes: "Forewarned, forearmed; to be prepared is half the battle."