

Bible Study

The Apostasy of the First Century and its End-Time Parallels

By C.M. White
Version 1.3



Contents

Introduction	4
Just what is an <i>apostasy</i>?	5
Why are there apostasies?	7
Old Testament apostasies	9
New Testament Scriptures on apostasy	11
The Babylonian Conspiracy of the First Century	12
The End-Time Apostasy	14
Foretold in the Old Testament.....	19
How to Hold on and Avoid Apostasies	26
Concluding Remarks.....	27
Bibliography	29

History Research Projects

GPO Box 864, Sydney, Australia 2001

www.friendsofsabbath.org

No limitation is placed upon reproduction of this document except that it must be reproduced in its entirety without modification or deletions. The publisher's name and address, copyright notice and this message must be included. It may be freely distributed but must be distributed without charge to the recipient.

Our purpose and desire are to foster Biblical, historical and related studies that strengthen the Church of God's message & mission and provides further support to its traditional doctrinal positions.

Note: *English Standard Version* (ESV) used throughout.

Associated studies

- *A Chronological Overview of the Changes (1986-96)* by C M White
- *A Short Note on II Thess 2:6-7 and being "out of the way"* by C M White
- *Amazing Temple Symbolism found in Revelation Chapter 3!* By C M White
- *Church of God and Sabbatarian Timelines* by C M White
- *The Apostasy of the Lost Century* by S G Olson
- *The 'Daughter of Zion' and 'My People' in Prophecy* by C M White

“I am astonished that **you are so quickly deserting him** who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.” (Gal 1:6-7)

“Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them.

“Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they whored after other gods and bowed down to them. **They soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked**, who had obeyed the commandments of the LORD, and they did not do so.” (Jud 2:16-17)

“Then the LORD said to me, 'Arise, go down quickly from here, for your people whom you have brought from Egypt have acted corruptly. **They have turned aside quickly out of the way** that I commanded them; they have made themselves a metal image.’” (Deut 9:12)

“Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, **so now many antichrists have come**. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.” (1John 2:18-19)

“Your evil will chastise you, and your apostasy will reprove you. **Know and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the LORD** your God; the fear of me is not in you, declares the Lord GOD of hosts.

“For long ago I broke your yoke and burst your bonds; but you said, 'I will not serve.' Yes, on every high hill and under every green tree you bowed down like a whore.” (Jer 2:19-20)

Introduction

From time-to-time in the old Worldwide Church of God, there were statements made in sermons about apostasy in the Old Testament and also in the Early Church, though nothing much. Very little was written about it in detail to solidify and prove the doctrine.

So, as a young person this intrigued me and I undertook my own Bible studies on the subject and historical readings to understand this concept. These studies have always kept me alert to what goes on within the Church of God after all, we were taught to be 'awake, alert and aware.'

In the mid-1970s I wrote up some notes on apostasies which evolved into the following hand written studies which form the basis for this Bible study:

- *The Babylonian Conspiracy in the First Century True Church of God* (1974, 1981)
- *End Time Apostasy in the True Church* (1983)
- *A Chronological Overview of the Changes* (1986-96)
- *Apostasy Now! Falling away from true doctrine* (June 1988)

In *A Chronological Overview of the Changes* I commenced keeping notes in early 1986 as I never felt comfortable with the transfer of leadership methods and especially when Tkach was announced as leader. What we knew about him as head of ministerial services was sparse; he was not one of the 'old timers'; and his sermons were rather shallow, exposing his lack of in-depth understanding and interest in the Bible. Very early on he began to shanghai away the old-timers and replace them with what can only be described as 'neo-protestants'.

My suspicion of Tkach led to my being harassed by mid-1986 when a minister heard about it through his spy network ("you do not understand church government" he used to exclaim). That was in addition to this jealous minister learning that I was going to have a book published on the origin of nations. He hit the ceiling about it and commenced years of lying and slander which I have immense records of. That is for another time, but suffice to say that he was part of the apostasy and heresies, mercilessly harassing the innocent wherever he went and persecuting the true believers. Following him was a trail of destruction from congregation to congregation for many years.

He and his cohorts were wolves of Satan, tearing apart the flock (usually behind closed doors) for many years even prior to the reign of the Tkaches. This needs to be recorded for posterity to expose the works of darkness and learn lessons from it for these types lead the congregations into apostasy.

With these sorts, law-breaking (ie law of the land) is rampant.

"Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, **but instead expose them.**

For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret.

But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible." (Eph 5:11-13)

Finally, the above listed studies together with other studies have been summarised and synthesised to form this article.

Just what is an *apostasy*?

First of all we need to understand that in an end-time context, an apostasy is not the Laodicean Era. That era, like all eras, is part of God's Church – it has its strengths and weaknesses. And like all individual Christians do.

Apostasies have been with us since the beginning when Adam and Eve left the way of God.

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word for apostasy is *azah* meaning “to loosen, i.e. relinquish, permit, etc. :- commit self, fail, forsake, fortify, help, leave ...” (*Strong's Concordance* #5800).

From this it may be deduced that apostasy includes the concept of permitting false practises and a loosening from God's Way – to stray away like a lost sheep – from the straight and narrow path.

Harper's Bible Dictionary frames it this way:

“apostasy, rebellion or abandonment of faith. It refers in the O.T. to Israel's unfaithfulness to God (Jer. 2:18; 5:6; cf. Josh. 22:22; 2Chron 33:19) and in the N.T. to the abandonment of Christian faith.” (p. 40)

In the New Testament the equivalent word is *apostasias* which means “defection from truth (prop. The state ... :- falling away, forsake” (*Strong's Concordance* #646).

Note also *Strong's* #647 *apostasias* – “something separative, ie (spec.) divorce :- (writing of) divorcement.” This in turn is derived from *aphistemi* derived “from 575 and 2476; to remove, i.e. ... instigate to revolt; usually ... to desist, desert, etc. – depart, draw (fall) away, refrain, withdraw self” (#868).

In regard to #575: “... it usually denotes separation, departure, cessation, completion, reversal.”

“In classic Gk. *apostasias* is a technical term for political revolt or defection. In LXX it always relates to rebellion against God (Jos. xxii.22; 2 Ch. xxix.19), originally instigated by Satan, the apostate dragon of Jb. xxvi.13” (*New Bible Dictionary*, p. 48).

Note that ancient Israel would sometimes openly revolt, but at other times they slid gradually into false beliefs and practices.

When we try and understand how this applies to the Church of God, we must consider the history and various types (or grades) of fallings away. It is not always an obvious, open, God-defying rebellion, hence it could take on various forms such as the following:

- An individual wondering off from the truth and into the world or other religions
- An individual deliberately rebelling against God, compromising or leaving behind the Law of God and involving him/her-self with major doctrinal issues
- Heresies and various fallings into error over the centuries and the resultant apostasies

- Open, hostile rebellion and breakaways from the Church of God family

As I wrote in a Bible study titled *Apostasy Now! Falling away from true doctrine* (June 1988):

“The perversion of the truth during the “lost century” which led to Simon Magus’ followers seizing control and casting out True Christians, is the most obvious, and blatant example of apostasy ... And how quickly after HWA’s death have we turned aside from his understanding!” (*Apostasy Now! Falling away from true doctrine*, pp. 2, 9)

Then I wrote in the aforementioned Bible study:

“Another apostasy is nigh ... It is more insidious – a “new liberalism”: an over-reaction to Pharisaical, “lording it over”, governmental mismanagement of people ... Yes, mishandling in a very harsh, cruel, humility-less, hounding, harassing, extremist way. Pressure, psychology and fierceness is brought to bear upon the hapless individual. Tactics that rightly belong to rebuking a local congregation as a whole, were brought to bear on unfortunate, hapless individual members. The result?: psychological problems, stress, depression, bitterness or even rebellings ...” (pp. 2-3)

I noticed and heard from others what was going on and was aghast that Satan’s wolves within the local congregations were tearing them apart.

So, cruelty and cultic-like behaviour by extremists can cause people to fall away. How they can live with themselves and have no regret for the evils they have perpetrated is beyond belief.

“... but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Matt 18:6. Cp Ps 140:4; Prov 4:16; Mal 2:8; Matt 13:41; 16:23)

Finally, scholars debate what the falling away of II Thessalonians is all about. Here are some views. It refers to:

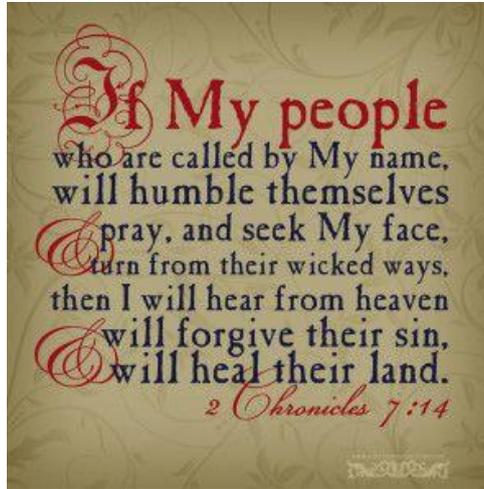
- only to the early Church;
- the end-time Church;
- a dual application of the above two;
- Israel in the end-times;
- the world in the end-times (at least one Church of God group subscribes to this point).

What trips up some interpreters of II Thessalonians is that it is dual, and the first fulfillment is partially fulfilled or can be fulfilled as types or prototypes over the centuries. Like so many initial fulfillments of prophecy.

In such a case it can refer to the first century; falling aways over the centuries; the end-time Church

of God; and even to Israel leaving behind normalcy and basic Biblical sense.

But for the converted (and those that have not fallen away), Paul advises them that these events will not be a surprise (1 Thess 5:4-5).



Why are there apostasies?

A cause seems to be a lack of quality of thought and contemplation of what is going on in the Church – a lack of education of God’s Way and His Word from which the basic formula (for want of a better term) for Christian development is provided. One could express it also in this fashion: the Bible is the foundation of knowledge – it provides us with the parameters in which to operate to develop holy, righteous character for the purpose of inheriting eternal life.

“We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and **take every thought captive to obey Christ.**” (II Cor 10:5)

As such, studying God’s Word is so important.

“My people are destroyed for **lack of knowledge**” (Hos 4:6)

“Therefore my people go into exile for **lack of knowledge**; their honored men go hungry, and their multitude is parched with thirst.” (Is 5:13. Cf 29:11-14)

A simple, timid approach to Bible study results in simpleness which God condemns in His Word

“How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge?” (Prov 1:22)

The famous Rushdoony puts it this way:

“A principle is stated in Deuteronomy 6:7-9, 20-25: education in the law is basic to and inseparable both from obedience to the law and from worship. The law

requires education in terms of the law. **Anything other than a Biblically grounded schooling is thus an act of apostasy for a believer:** it involves having another god and bowing down before him to learn from him. There can be no true worship without true education, because the law prescribes and is absolute, and no man can approach God in contempt of God's prescription" (Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, p. 22). [emphasis mine]

This sounds so much like Herbert W Armstrong emphasising education.

Lacking in a grounded education in God's way and doctrines can lead to one being deceived and tricked into apostasy:

"If you hear in one of your cities, which the LORD your God is giving you to dwell there,
that **certain worthless fellows have gone out among you and have drawn away the inhabitants** of their city, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods,' which you have not known" (Deut 13:12-13).

"I will stretch out my hand against Judah and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and **I will cut off from this place the remnant of Baal and the name of the idolatrous priests along with the priests, those who bow down on the roofs to the host of the heavens**, those who bow down and swear to the LORD and yet swear by Milcom, **those who have turned back** from following the LORD, who do not seek the LORD or inquire of him" (Zeph 1:4-6).

These Scriptures show us that mixing the true worship with false or pagan practices receives very serious condemnation for such is a high level of apostasy. Such a one is falling away from God's grace.

The above we can see how the neglect of "sound doctrine" leads to apostasy, however gradual and insidious that might be.

What are the reasons for apostasies – for people leaving God's way? Among those one can identify are the following:

- Persecution and abuse (Matt 24:9)
- False teachers (Matt 24:11)
- Temptation (Luke 8:13)
- Worldliness (II Tim 4:14)
- Defective knowledge of Christ (I John 2:19)
- Moral lapse (Heb 6:4-6)
- Forsaking worship and spiritual living (Heb 10:25-31)
- Unbelief (Heb 3:12)

Hebrews 3 in particular informs us of what apostasies are like:

“Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.’ As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest.’”

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.

But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

As it is said, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”

For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses?

And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?

And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient?

So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.” (Heb

So, just as there was an apostasy in ancient Israel, so there can be collectively in the congregations of God’s people since Christ. Or by individuals.

In effect one is “turning back” from God as revealed in the following verses: ISam 15:11; Ps 36:3; 125:5; Is 1:4; Jer 3:10; 15:6; Ezek 3:20; Hos 4:15-16; 11:7; Zeph 1:4-6; Heb 10:38-39; IPet 2:18-22.

And when one returns to God, it must be completeness, not a feigned repentance which God condemns:

“Yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah **did not return to me with her whole heart, but in pretense**, declares the LORD.” (Jer 3:10)

Those that go into apostasy can put great strain upon the congregations of the true believers either by infecting them or by leaving a hole in the congregation and upsetting it. The pastors’ and elders’ duty is to heal these wounds and to seek out the lost sheep.

Old Testament apostasies

The first apostates in all of universal history are Satan and his demons

“And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, **but left their proper dwelling**, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until

the judgment of the great day". (Jude 6)

Later Adam and Eve fell away or forsook God's Way (Gen 3) as did Israel:

"Forsaking Yahweh" was the characteristic and oft-recurring sin of the chosen people, especially in their contact with idolatrous nations. It constituted their supreme national peril ...

Prophecy originated as a Divine and imperative protest against this historic tendency to defection from the religion of Yahweh.

In classical Greek, apostasy signified revolt from a military commander.

The persecutions of the early Christian centuries forced many to deny Christian discipleship and to signify their apostasy by offering incense to a heathen deity or blaspheming the name of Christ. The emperor Julian, who probably never vitally embraced the Christian faith, is known in history as "the Apostate," having renounced Christianity for paganism soon after his accession to the throne.

An apostate's defection from the faith may be intellectual ("Apostasy; Apostate", *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol 1, p. 192). [emphasis mine]

A number of apostasies are recorded for our benefit (and as typology) in the Old Testament. Here are some of them:

- Ex. 20:23 – note that God warns against apostasies. Refer also to Deut 6:14; 11:16-17; 27:13-15; 28:15.
- Jos 24:1, 16-28 – Israel became so bad that Joshua found it necessary to re-pledge the entire nation to God. A reading of Jud 2:11-17 shows how Israel did not remain long righteous. See Jos 10:6, 10, 13, 16.
- Then in ISam 8:1-9; 12:10 we have another example – note that Hebrew here is *azab* (= forsake or forsook) (cf Jud 2:7-17).
- IKings 12:28-33 –apostasy continued into the divided kingdom of Israel (ie Jeroboam). Note also IKings 14:22-34; IChron 12:1 (Rehoboam); IKings 16:30-33 (Ahab); 22:51-53 (Ahaziah); IICron 21:6, 10, 12-15 (Jehoram); 28:1-4; 29:19 (Ahaz); 33:1-9 (Manasseh); 33:22 (Amon); IICron 25:14 (Amaziah).
- Further research into apostasies in the Old Testament reveals that forsaking God's Law is apostasy (note Ezra 9:9-10; Ps 119:8, 53).
- A further apostasy of God's people is recorded in Dan 11:30 at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes IV which seems to pre-sage that prophesied in II Thess 2:4¹ and Matt 24. Note

¹ "The fact that the day of the Lord would be preceded by *the* apostasy (falling away, rebellion) ... had been clearly predicted by the Lord while he was still on earth (Matt 24:10-13). During the old dispensation the predicted final apostasy had been foreshadowed again and again by defection of Israel from the living God. A most striking instance of apostasy occurred during the reign of that cruel and wicked forerunner of the Antichrist, namely Antiochus Epiphanes (who ruled from 175-164 B.C.). He was determined to wipe out the religion of Israel root and branch:

"In those days there came forth out of Israel, transgressors of the law, who persuaded many, saying, Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles that are round about us... And they made themselves uncircumcised, and forsook the holy covenant, and joined themselves to the gentiles, and sold themselves to do evil... And many of Israel consented to his worship, and sacrificed to the idols, and profaned the sabbath... And the king's officers, *that were enforcing the apostasy*, came into the city of Modein to sacrifice" (1 Macc 1:11, 15, 43; 2:15)...

also Dan 11:31-33.

In effect apostasy – in its various degrees – is going backwards from the spiritual journey which is supposed for on and forward to the spiritual Promised Land/Kingdom of God – back toward Egypt (cf Prov 4:2; Is 1:4-5; Jer 2:13-19; 5:7, 19; 9:13; 15:6; 16:11; 17:13; 19:4; 22:9).

New Testament Scriptures on apostasy

Matthew records a prophecy that is applicable for both the first and last centuries which should warn us that events may re-occur. Given the repetitious nature of some events, the question is: “can we learn from them and even anticipate them?”

For, if we can see patterns and the various ways an apostasy can infiltrate and take hold, we can be forewarned. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

But to get to the position where we might be able to anticipate the drift toward apostasy, we need to know what its chief components are so that we might recognise it.

Matthew provides some clue as to what makes one apostate or a group to take on such characteristics:

“And many **false prophets** will arise and lead many astray.

And because **lawlessness** will be increased, the **love of many will grow cold**.

But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” (Matt 24:11-14)²

Apostasies have occurred ever since in the various eras of God’s Church as it ebbed and flowed over the centuries: Rev 2:6 (Ephesus), 9 (Smyrna), 14-15 (Pergamos), 20, 23 (Thyatira); 3:9 (Philadelphia). Presumably the Sardis and Laodicean eras also experience apostasies, but perhaps they were/are so weakened by their own inadequacies full-blown apostasies were not necessary to sift the true believers from the false. Or the apostasies are simply not referred to in Revelation 2 & 3.³

“What the apostle Paul is now saying, here in II Thes 2:3, amount to this: Just like the first coming of Christ was preceded by a period of apostasy, so also the second coming will not occur until a similar apostasy has taken place. In this case, however, the apostasy will be a falling away from (yes, and open rebellion against) ... God...

“It will be a defection on the part of those who have been reached by the gospel (cf. 1 Peter 4:17; Ezek 9:6), and it will be on a large scale: “many shall stumble ... many false prophets will arise and shall lead many astray ... the love of many shall wax cold” (Matt 24:10-13). The use of the term *apostasy* here in II Thes 2:3 *without an accompanying adjective* points to the fact that, by and large, the visible Church will forsake the true faith” (W Hendricksen, *Exposition of I and II Thessalonians, I and II Timothy and Titus, New Testament Commentary*, pp.169-170).

² Other pertinent Scriptures that cross-reference with the above are: II Tim 3:3-4; Luke 21:12-19; Mark 13:11-13; Matt 24:40-51.

Another to consider is Matt 25:1-13 which appears to have a dual application like so many prophetic passages. It appears to have application to the Early Church; the Church throughout the ages; and the end-time Laodicean era of God’s Church.

³ Following are a number of Scriptures on the apostasy within the first century Church of God:

Acts 21:21 (Paul was himself) falsely accuse of apostasy); Gal 4:8-11; Eph 4:14; Phil 1:15-18; Col 1:23; 2:8; I Cor 11:4, 13-15; 15:58; I Thess 5:21; II Thess 2:15; I Tim 1:3-6, 19-20; 4:1-6, 14-15; 6:3-5; II Tim 2:16-18; 4:3-4, 10 (NB v 10); II Pet 2:1-3, 10, 12-19 (NB vv 12-19); 3:17; James 1:23; I John 2:18-19, 26 (NB v 18, 26); 3:1; 4:1-6; II John 7-12; III John 9-10, 13; Jude 3-4, 10-12. The reader can look up each one for him/her-self.

The Babylonian Conspiracy of the First Century

Armed with the aforementioned background and information, we can now explore the apostasy of the first century.

If one were to read the New Testament in its historical order (ie the first 3 Gospels -> Acts -> General Epistles -> Gospel of John), one would be able ascertain the following historical sequence:

1. The life of Christ, His doctrines, teachings followed by His persecution by the Jewish authorities;
2. The early years of the Ephesian Era of which the earliest opposition was Jewish, opposing the acceptance of Christ as the Messiah and Judaizers. For this reason, the early ministry of the Apostles put primary emphasis on the temporal nature of the sacrificial system (which will not be restored until Christ's return), the holy spirit, the resurrection and the infallible proof of Christ's messiahship (refer to the first part of the book of Acts);
3. The latter part of Acts the emphasis changes to false prophets such as Simon Magus and his followers).

After 33AD, when the Apostles encountered Simon Magus (possibly the leader or Pater of a section of the Babylonian Mystery Religion), they uncovered the synchronisation of true Hebraic Christianity with the Mysteries, thus distorting the true religion.

The work of Simon Magus or similar evidently spread and made inroads into the sabbatarian Church of God especially as more and more non-Israelites with pagan backgrounds began to assemble with the true believers. This enabled pagan beliefs and anti-nomianism to make inroads into the fellowship groupings that were emerging.

Simultaneously, external opposition to the Church of God became increasingly gentile.

As a result, we find that some of Paul's writings take on these pagan and antinomian forces as do I and II Peter, I, II and III John and Jude which show that the gentile opposition and infiltration was primarily aimed against God's Laws. It is obvious that they taught that "grace" was licence to disobey many Laws of God and that faith in Christ somehow circumvented or was superior to the Law.

4. John's Gospel also contains warnings imbedded that are too easy to read over.

First of all, it was likely to have been the last book of the New Testament written prior to the Book of Revelation. It is entirely different to all the other Gospels. For example it does not mention the destruction of Jerusalem indicating that this was now past.

John also uses certain characteristic words seldom used by the other Gospel writers as he is trying to get a message across to the early Church by using key words such as "love" which includes obeying God – why? Because in the last first century the forces of antinomianism must have found fertile ground for their attack upon the Law of God.

The term "work" is used – an inference to do the Work of the Church (and in ourselves) – but the Ephesus Era had ceased, to a large degree, to forcefully have much of an outreach. Many had fled

(Rev 2:2, 5), becoming known as Nazarenes (Acts 24:5).

Another word used is “send” or “sent” – note that an Apostle is one sent by God into the world to proclaim the Gospel message.

He is effectively saying that Christ was sent by God and kept the Father’s commandments.

Another way of looking at this is that John was writing to the Church and stating: “I am the last Apostle alive. I was with Christ for years. He kept the Law and so do I, therefore follow me as I do Him. So, get back on the track as I am the only senior leader of the Church left who knows what the track is.”

So, he is asking the members to follow the “one sent” – the Apostle because he follows Christ. “Do not follow the way of the Mysteries” is the message intended, it seems, to settle doctrinal issues within the Church. In fact John shows his authority as if to cement the concept of following him into the minds of the readers and hearers of his Gospel (John 16:13; 21:20-24; Rev 1:2). Perhaps he was saying that the former leader of the Church is now dead, so whom else is there to follow?

Unity is also of concern to John: notice how he emphasises that the Church should be “one” (John 7:21; 10:16; 17:11, 21-23).

Another word that is used is “truth” with the possible intent to keep the purity of the faith and to dig into the Bible to find and keep its hidden treasures (John 17:17).

What should be of interest to the Church of God is the way he framed his Gospel. He wrote the account of Jesus’ life centring it around the Holy Days because he lived in a time when false (antinomian) “Christianity” was stirring with the Holy Days relevance to Christians being questioned. Note: each chapter of the Gospel of John (except the first and last) are interrelated with the Holy Days.

Other matters he raises which we need to consider are: the Church is named after the Father (17:12); persecution is coming (ch. 16); the light of God’s Way (Law) vs sin (darkness) (1:9; 3:19; 6:14; 9:39; 11:27; 12:46; 16:28; 18:37).

No wonder his account of Christ’s life and deeds on earth is somewhat different to the other Gospels.

Notice also that each book of the New Testament ends with “amen” in the original Greek. Only Acts, James and III John do not which may signify that they were not completed at that time (“amen” is of Hebrew derivation and signifies completion). Each missing “amen” could be a special sign indicating that God wants us to understand that certain knowledge was not to be made known at that time. It seems that historical research has revealed what occurred after those writings such as the movement of the true Christians (Nazarenes) away from Jerusalem.

One may speculate that if the final chapter(s) of Acts has been included, the identity of the true believers, the whereabouts of the “lost” tribes of Israel and the doctrines of the Babylonian

conspiracy would have been fully revealed (as it is, the New Testament casts some light on these, but not in completeness). Rather, God wants us to dwell on these matters and to research them. Perhaps He does not wish to make it too easy for us to discover these? Yet His spirit will lead us to do so and to discover these truths – especially during the last days (Dan 12:4b).

Perhaps if James had ended with the ordinary salutation, the nations of Israel would have been disclosed.

In addition, God did not permit John to make known, in plain language, the names of the leaders of that Babylonian conspiracy and the city of their operation in an overt fashion (III John 13). One could work it out, especially from the 17th chapter of Revelation, written a little later.

So, the missing “amen” in the three aforementioned writings, appear to be telling us to look elsewhere in the Bible for the answer to what this Babylonian conspiracy is all about (Acts 8; II Thess 2; Rev 17).

Living into the last decade of the first century, it seems John was most concerned by the condition of the Church. The Judaizers were mainly silenced due to the actions of the Romans, but that left the Mysteries with a gaping hole to infiltrate the Church of God. The Church was scattered and weak, worn out from persecutions and oft on the move allowing for anti-nomianism to creep in.

And so John wrote three letters which parallel the end-time Church of God⁴. I John shows how the Church (or part thereof) was going off the track and watering-down the Law etc. In I John 2:18 he warns it is a *last time* and that the end was closing in. Indeed, that era was drawing to a close it seems.

II John goes further and indicates that we must not receive those who wish to draw us away from the truth (cp. Deut 6:14-15; 13:1-11).

While III John shows us the Church getting back on the track.

Each if these letters were likely written at Ephesus after his exile from the island of Patmos according to commentaries – which would be appropriate given that this city was typological of the Ephesus era.

The End-Time Apostasy

What we experienced in the old Worldwide Church of God mirrors the apostasy of the first century in many ways. However, what was experienced is not all there is to apostasy as we have seen. It takes various forms and can be large or small.

Nor does it mean that there will be no more major apostasies in the future. We just have to be aware of this occurring again and as such it behoves us to do all we can in our individual lives, in the

⁴ The wording is “The 3 letters of John parallel the end-time Church” in my handwritten notes *The Babylonian Conspiracy in the First Century True Church of God*.

local congregation and at the corporate level to prevent such happening again.

Let us turn to Matt 24:1-9 where Christ predicts future upheavals, persecutions and Christians being led astray. While this referred to conditions of the first century and is typological of the end-times, it should be remembered that apostasy has been occurring over the centuries.

Martyrdom is predicted in verse 9 but in Luke 21:14-18 (a parallel chapter) it seems to expand out to include false allegations and slander or character assassination. These character assassinations experienced in the last days have been occurring for decades – there seems to be a spirit of false accusation and lies that has haunted God’s people during these days.

But physical killings – martyrdom – is yet future. Having occurred during the first century and up until the 17th century (and especially during the Middle Ages) – the brutal torture and murder of God’s people will occur again (cp Matt 10:16-23, 28-37). It is only the dominance of the Anglo-Keltic powers and their global umbrella that is preventing this from occurring. This is temporal and will not last forever.

Matthew then reveals the next step in all this harassment for the people of God in chapter 24, verse 10:

“And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.”

This is no doubt the consequence of the lies and persecutions, problems and character assassinations many in the Church of God will be *offended* by (KJV. The *Revised Standard Version* renders it “a falling away”).

In the following verse (11) one may interpret it in a dual sense – the rise of false Christianity based on some form of antinomianism beginning to emerge in the first century

“And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.”

In verse 12 we discover that lawlessness (= sin. Cf Rom 3:23) – watering-down and even rebelling against God’s Law (ie His way of life, the Torah and Commandments) will result in people growing cold toward others – aloof, tripping up others, false allegations, undermining and no empathy or feelings toward others:

“And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.”

John Gill’s commentary explains it well:

“And because iniquity shall abound,.... Meaning, either the malice and wickedness of outrageous persecutors, which should greatly increase; or **the treachery and hatred of the apostates; or the errors and heresies of false teachers; or the wickedness that prevailed in the lives and conversations of some, that were called Christians:** for each of these seem to be hinted at in the context, and may be all included, as making up the abounding iniquity here spoken of; the consequence

of which would be,
the love of many shall wax cold. This would be the case of many, but not of all; for in the midst of this abounding iniquity, there were some, the ardour of whose love to Christ, to his Gospel, and to the saints, did not abate: **but then there were many, whose zeal for Christ, through the violence of persecution, was greatly damped; and through the treachery of false brethren,** were shy of the saints themselves, not knowing who to trust; and through the principles of the false teachers, the power of godliness, and the vital heat of religion, were almost lost; and through a love of the world, and of carnal ease and pleasure, love to the saints was grown very chill, and greatly left; as the instances of Demas, and those that forsook the Apostle Paul, at his first answer before Nero, show. This might be true of such, who were real believers in Christ; who might fall under great decays, through the prevalence of iniquity; since it does not say their love shall be lost, but wax cold." [emphasis mine]

Similarily Christ questioned a condition for the Church of the end-time:

"And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?
I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, **when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"** (Luke 18:7-8)

One commentary provides the following insights:

"From this we learn: (1) That the *primary* and *historical* reference of this parable is to the Church in its *widowed*, desolate, oppressed, defenseless condition during the present absence of her Lord in the heavens; (2) That in these circumstances importunate, persevering prayer for deliverance is the Church's fitting exercise; (3) That notwithstanding every encouragement to this, so long will the answer be delayed, while the need of relief continues the same, and all hope of deliverance will have nearly died out, and "faith" of Christ's coming scarcely to be found. But the application of the parable to *prayer in general* is so obvious as to have nearly hidden its more direct reference, and so precious that one cannot allow it to disappear in any public and historical interpretation." (Jamieson, Faussett, Brown, *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*)

Albert Barnes adds to this thought:

"Faith - The word "faith" is sometimes taken to denote the "whole" of religion, and it has been understood in this sense here; but there is a close connection in what Christ says, and it should be understood as referring to what he said before. The truth that he had been teaching was, that God would deliver his people from their calamities and save them, though he suffered them to be long tried. He asks them here whether, when he came, he should find "this faith," or a belief of "this truth," among his followers? Would they be found persevering in prayer, and "believing" that God would yet avenge them; or would they cease to pray "always, and faint?"

This is not to be understood, therefore, as affirming that when Christ comes to judgment there will be few Christians on the earth, and that the world will be overrun with wickedness. That “may be” true, but it is not the truth taught here.”
(*Notes on the Whole Bible*)

Indeed. Will there be true trust in God and the complete body of beliefs/doctrines that God expects of us? Will the end-time Church of God composed of the Philadelphia Era, Laodicean Era and affected by false brethren struggle with this?

Christ asks the question as if it is affirmed in the positive.

Below are a number of Scriptures providing admonishment to watch out for false ministers within our midst with their deceitful behaviours and false doctrines; and also false brethren.

“There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—
one Lord, **one faith**, one baptism,
one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” (Eph 4:4-6)

“**Do not despise prophecies**,
but test everything; hold fast what is good
Abstain from every form of evil.” (I Thess 5:20-22)

“So then, brothers, stand firm and **hold to the traditions that you were taught by us**, either by our spoken word or by our letter.” (II Thess 2:15)

“I am coming soon. **Hold fast what you have**, so that no one may seize your crown.” (Rev 3:11)

“For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.
Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.
Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.”
(II John 1:7-9)

“Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to **contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints**.
For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, **who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality** and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.” (Jude 3-4)

“... so that we **may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine**, by human cunning, by craftiness in

deceitful schemes.” (Eph 4:14)

“if indeed you **continue in the faith**, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.” (Col 1:23)

“Therefore, my beloved brothers, **be steadfast, immovable**, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” (ICor 15:58)

“... for you know that **the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.**” (James 1:3)

“For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,
and **will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.**” (IITim 4:3-4)

“Now the Spirit expressly says **that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons**, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.” (ITim 4:1-3)

The “later times” (= “latter times” in the *King James Version*) to which Paul refers in II Timothy 4 was for the first century as type of the last days prior to the return of Christ. Is this not a description for some today? Paul also uses the term “last days” in the following chapter:

“But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, **abusive**, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, **heartless**, unappeasable, **slanderous**, without self-control, **brutal**, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so **these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith.** But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men.” (IITim 3:1-9. Cp IIPet 3:3-10)

“But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.

They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions."

It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.

But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 17-20)

At this juncture it is worth quoting the following from the article *Amazing Temple Symbolism found in Revelation chapter 3!*:

"In my original notes I wrote that the pillars appear

"to be definitely taken from Solomon's Temple. Philadelphians are likened to pillars which are steadfast and will not be removed. Why?

(a) because in contrast the pillars in Solomon's Temple were smashed and removed;

(b) because there'll be attempts to throw them out of the spiritual Temple"

In this light I recall the writings of early twentieth century Church of God leader, Greenberry G Rupert's warning ... I had read something fascinating in one of his works concerning the *The Seven Churches* in the early 1980s:

"Verse 9 shows there is a great apostacy during the history of the Philadelphia church. Yet there are some few in that age that have kept his word ... How truly all this history is fulfilled before the eyes of those who can see, having eyes anointed to discern truth ... **Now is the time to not be ashamed of his truth and proclaim it.**" (pages 19-20)



G.G. Rupert

Rupert's prediction was rather uncanny and came to fulfilment just over 70 years later!

Foretold in the Old Testament

Below are a selection of prophecies on the end-time apostasy of Israel and thus the true Church of God. I say "thus" because the world impacts the Church and Christians can absorb the world's (ie

Israel's) ways and philosophies, integrating these with Biblical truths. One can also term this *synchronism*. In addition, spiritual Israel is typified by physical Israel. So, prophetically, what occurs to the physical occurs also to the spiritual.

Today this would mean political correctness and globalisation which got a huge leg up in the late 1960s and has gradually expanded its influence and control ever since. From around 2015 it has taken off in leaps and bounds.

In the meantime, spiritual Israel mirrors physical Israel, though lagging in absorbing the false philosophies of the age.

The philosophies of political correctness includes turning a blind eye to abortion and euthanasia; saying nothing against surrogacy or polygamy; believing in "open borders" and so-called "refugees"; admiring leftwing political leaders while denigrating conservative ones; a soft approach toward homosexuality; liberal divorce & remarriage doctrine; youth elevated over their elders; abusiveness; older singles pushed to one side; lack of instruction on male-female roles and such like.

"For I know that after my death you will surely act corruptly and turn aside from the way that I have commanded you. And in the days to come evil will befall you, because you will do what is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger through the work of your hands." (Deut 31:29)

Young's Literal Translation renders "days to come" as "latter end of the days" and the *King James Version* has it "the latter days". The days to come were after the death of Moses, but apparently extends to the time prior to the return of Christ, typologically,

Centuries later Paul warned the Ephesians similarly:

"... know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears." (Acts 20:29-31)

Refer also to Matt 24:42; 25:13; IPet 5:8; I Thess 5:6; Luke 21:36; 12:37; Lam 3:24-26.

Another prophecy that is typological of the Church of God is found in Deuteronomy:

"And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you. And there you will serve gods of wood and stone, the work of human hands, that neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell. But from there you will seek the LORD your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul. "When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon you **in the latter**

days, you will return to the LORD your God and obey his voice.” (Deut 4:27-30)

Spiritually, the Church of God, when it does not please the Almighty, is scattered and its power broken. Upon real repentance, He rescues it from disappearing and kick-starts a new Work to proclaim the Gospel (although not all scattering is due to apostasy. It can come from persecutions and the only way to survive is to flee).

“The anger of the LORD will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished the intents of his heart. **In the latter days you will understand it clearly.**

“I did not send the prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied.

But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds ...

Behold, I am against those who prophesy lying dreams, declares the LORD, and who tell them and lead my people astray by their lies and their recklessness, when I did not send them or charge them. So they do not profit this people at all, declares the LORD.” (Jer 23:20-22, 32)

In verse 20 Jeremiah states “In the latter days you will understand it clearly.” For other verses on “latter days” see 48:47; 49:39; Ezek 38:16; Hos 3:5; Mic 4:5 which demonstrate that in prophecy “latter days” revolves around the time of Christ’s return. As I wrote in my handwritten notes *End Time Apostasy in the True Church*: “Sure, that prophecy refers to Israel, perhaps the S.D.A. ‘breakaway’ of 1860 ... Perhaps even a yet future occurrence?” (p. 2). Indeed, that is what occurred in the old Worldwide Church of God.

Other prophecies which seem to parallel the Church are found in Isaiah:

“Then the eyes of those who see will not be closed, and the ears of those who hear will give attention.

The heart of the hasty will understand and know, and the tongue of the stammerers will hasten to speak distinctly.

The fool will no more be called noble, nor the scoundrel said to be honorable.

For the fool speaks folly, and his heart is busy with iniquity, to practice ungodliness, to utter error concerning the LORD, to leave the craving of the hungry unsatisfied, and to deprive the thirsty of drink.

As for the scoundrel—his devices are evil; he plans wicked schemes to ruin the poor with lying words, even when the plea of the needy is right.

But he who is noble plans noble things, and on noble things he stands.” (Is 32:3-8)

“Cry aloud; do not hold back; lift up your voice like a trumpet; declare to my people their transgression, to the house of Jacob [*or Church of God*] their sins.

Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near to God.

‘Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and

you take no knowledge of it?' Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, **and oppress all your workers** [or members].

Behold, you fast only to **quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist**. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high.

Is such the fast that I choose, a day for a person to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the LORD?

"Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in." (Is 58:1-6, 12)

In addition to the Israelitish historical and prophetic fulfillment of the above, it is rather pertinent to the Church of God. If we follow His ways, our ancient spiritual ruins will be rebuilt and a new, powerful Work will emerge and forge ahead.

"... if my people **who are called by my name** humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land." (IIChron 7:14)

This applies to Israel of course, but also to the Church of God (called by God's name) and individual Christians.

"The priests did not say, 'Where is the LORD?' Those who handle the law did not know me; **the shepherds transgressed against me**; the prophets prophesied by Baal and went after things that do not profit.

"Therefore I still contend with you, declares the LORD, and with your children's children I will contend.

For cross to the coasts of Cyprus and see, or send to Kedar and examine with care; see if there has been such a thing.

Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit.

Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, for my people have **committed two evils: they have forsaken me**, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

"Is Israel a slave? Is he a homeborn servant? Why then has he become a prey?" (Jer 2:8-14)

This prophecy for ancient Israel can easily be applied to the Church – the priests and shepherds are type of the ministry who have led the people astray and into apostasy. They have deserted God and gone a whoring after foreign gods and false doctrines. They have adopted political correctness, the trinity, immortal soul and going to heaven at death, Christmas, Easter, New Year's day. And they have abandoned other truths such as water baptism, the seventh day Sabbath, clean & unclean meats, the true Gospel, a detailed understanding of prophecy, the modern-day identity of Israel as

well as watering-down or even forgetting the coming Millennial reign of the Messiah.

So much for them loving God and His Son, Jesus Christ. There is no way one can have a relationship with God by not doing His will and adhering to true doctrine.

“For wicked men are found among my people; they lurk like fowlers lying in wait.

They set a trap; they catch men.

Like a cage full of birds, their houses are full of deceit; therefore they have become great and rich;

they have grown fat and sleek. They know no bounds in deeds of evil; **they judge not with justice** the cause of the fatherless, to make it prosper, and they do not defend the rights of the needy.

Shall I not punish them for these things? declares the LORD, and shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this?”

An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land:

the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule at their direction; my people love to have it so, but what will you do when the end comes?” (Jer 5:26-31)

Again, the above does not only refer to ancient Israel, but false ministers within our midst to this day. Satan’s wolves continue to fleece the flock and scatter it.

Jeremiah raised condemnation again:

“For the shepherds are stupid and do not inquire of the LORD; therefore they have not prospered, and all their flock is scattered.” (Jer 10:21)

The false ministers have scattered the flock due to cruelty and also due to false doctrines. In fact, the ultimate scattering of spiritual Israel will occur along with physical Israel during the Great Tribulation.

“I have forsaken my house; I have abandoned my heritage; I have given the beloved of my soul into the hands of her enemies.

My heritage has become to me like a lion in the forest; she has lifted up her voice against me; therefore I hate her.

Is my heritage to me like a hyena's lair? Are the birds of prey against her all around?

Go, assemble all the wild beasts; bring them to devour.

Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard; they have trampled down my portion; they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness.

They have made it a desolation; desolate, it mourns to me. The whole land is made desolate, but no man lays it to heart.” (Jer 12:7-11)

“And the LORD said to me: “The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. **They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds.**”

(Jer 14:14. Cf. 23:25; 27:14-15; Matt 24:4; Deut 18:20)

The concept of prophesying includes teaching and even preaching. In the above case it seems to indicate watered-down piffle that anyone could get at Sunday School! In other words they are not feeding the flock with solid, strong meat. There is no depth to their preaching and very little breadth of subject matter due to their incapacity and lack of inspiration. And also their infiltrating the Church to gradually undermine its truths.

“Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!”

declares the LORD.

Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people: “You have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil deeds, declares the LORD.

Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply.

“Both prophet and priest are ungodly; even in my house I have found their evil, declares the LORD.

Therefore their way shall be to them like slippery paths in the darkness, into which they shall be driven and fall, for I will bring disaster upon them in the year of their punishment, declares the LORD.

“I did not send the prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied.

I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, ‘I have dreamed, I have dreamed!’

How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart” (Jer 23: 1-3, 11-12, 21, 25-26. Read also verses 26-40)

This is the consequence of the false ministers:

“My people have been lost sheep. **Their shepherds have led them astray**, turning them away on the mountains. From mountain to hill they have gone. They have forgotten their fold.” (Jer 50:6. Cf 29:8-9, 23)

There are many other prophecies that deliver similar condemnations. The book of Lamentations is typological of the true Church through any age, but particularly ours:

“What can I say for you, to what compare you, O daughter of Jerusalem? What can I liken to you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion? For your ruin is vast as the sea; who can heal you?

Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions; they have not exposed your iniquity to restore your fortunes, but have seen for you oracles that are false and misleading.” (Lam 2:13-14)

Ezekiel is just as virulent:

“For there shall be no more any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel”. (Ezek 12:24)

This is not just ancient history nor does it solely pertain to the false churches. It is just as salient to any of us in the Church of God family and especially those that lead us into contamination or even all out apostasy.

“Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel, who are prophesying, and say to those who prophesy from their own hearts: ‘Hear the word of the LORD!’

Thus says the Lord GOD, Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!

Your prophets have been like jackals among ruins, O Israel.

You have not gone up into the breaches, or built up a wall for the house of Israel, that it might stand in battle in the day of the LORD.

They have seen false visions and lying divinations. They say, ‘Declares the LORD,’ when the LORD has not sent them, and yet they expect him to fulfill their word.

Have you not seen a false vision and uttered a lying divination, whenever you have said, ‘Declares the LORD,’ although I have not spoken?’

Your veils also I will tear off and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand as prey, and you shall know that I am the LORD.

Because you have disheartened the righteous falsely, although I have not grieved him, and you have encouraged the wicked, that he should not turn from his evil way to save his life,

therefore you shall no more see false visions nor practice divination. I will deliver my people out of your hand. And you shall know that I am the LORD.” (Ezek 13:2-7, 21-23. Cf chapter 20; 22:6-9, 25-29; 11:2; Ps 71:10; Jer 23:11)

It is true that some ‘ministers’ have turned a blind eye to abortion, perversions, members being corrupted by weird doctrines and such like. They have led the people back into spiritual slavery in spiritual Egypt instead of the light of God’s way and laws.

Ezekiel in chapter 34 (like Jeremiah 23) pronounces great condemnation upon the leaders of Israel – again, this is typological of the Church.

“Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, **shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep?**

You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep.

The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and **with force and harshness you have ruled them.**

So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered;

they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them.”

(Ezek 34:1-6. Read also verses 7-24)

On a spiritual level, the ultimate re-gathering of His flock will be at Christ's return. But there have been regatherings and restorations of the Church over the centuries and can be yet in the future.

"Yet let no one contend, and let none accuse, for with you is my contention, O priest.

You shall stumble by day; the prophet also shall stumble with you by night; and I will destroy your mother.

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

The more they increased, the more they sinned against me; I will change their glory into shame.

They feed on the sin of my people; they are greedy for their iniquity.

And it shall be like people, like priest; I will punish them for their ways and repay them for their deeds.

They shall eat, but not be satisfied; they shall play the whore, but not multiply, because they have forsaken the LORD to cherish whoredom, wine, and new wine, which take away the understanding." (Hos 4:4-11)

"I will return again to my place, until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face, and in their distress **earnestly** seek me." (Hos 5:15)

"I will stretch out my hand against Judah and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off from this place the remnant of Baal and the name of the idolatrous priests along with the priests ...

those who have turned back from following the LORD, who do not seek the LORD or inquire of him." (Zeph 1:4, 6)

How to Hold on and Avoid Apostasies

In the first instance, NOTHING must shake our faith, including false ministers or false brethren from within (Eph 4:14; ICor 15:58) – be steady as a rock – completely immovable in the true faith.

In fact, be so rooted in, that no wind of doctrine will affect you (that includes the winds of deceit of this age, such as political correctness) (Col 1:23; 2:7; I Thess 5:21; Jude 3, 13, 20).⁵

⁵ IThessalonians appears to be dual – referring to another great apostasy within God's people and the rebellious nature of the final Beast leader:

"... I have chosen to refer to this personage as "the Rebel," picking up the language of Paul himself from the noun *apostasía* ("rebellion"; cf. LXX Josh 22:22; 2 Chron 29:19; 1 Macc 2:15 ... the more precise rendering "the lawless one" seems too strained in English; and, in any case, "lawless" in English suggests someone who operates *outside* the law, where this personage is decidedly *over against* the law ..." (G Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians, The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 282).

"He is the epitome of opposition to the laws of God. Satan so indwells and operates through him that his main delight will be in breaking God's righteous laws" (R Thomas, *1 & 2 Thessalonians, Expositors Bible Commentary*, Vol.11, p. 322).

Of course, there are times when one must bend with the wind and take the flack – but don't be blown away by the storm or snap and break because false doctrines will carry you away from God (Heb 13:9; Matt 11:7; ICor 12:2; James 1:6; 3:4). Be sturdy. Be strong.

1. do not be so rigid that you snap – be willing to lose a few leaves and twigs and learn from the experience. Make reasonable changes to survive.
2. do not be so wishy-washy and lacking in Biblical knowledge so that you can be easily influenced by others that seem to know better – be for-armed and educated in the Truth so that you are not blown away and disappear into the desert storm. Know whom or where to go for assistance.⁶

The answer is also to earnestly seek the “old paths” of God's way, commandments and truths:

“Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time that I punish them, they shall be overthrown,” says the LORD. Thus says the LORD: “Stand by the roads, and look, **and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it**, and find rest for your souls. But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’

I set watchmen over you, saying, ‘**Pay attention to the sound of the trumpet!**’ But they said, ‘We will not pay attention.’” (Jer 6:15-17. See 7:12; 18:15; Ps 143:5)

Concluding Remarks

My handwritten notes for *The Babylonian Conspiracy in the First Century True Church of God* contains this statement:

“4.0 II Thess 2:7 [in first century – this could perhaps be referring to the death of the apostles. The conspiracy to take over the Church did not gain read prominence until after their death. In end-time, will H.W.A. die, and Satan will attempt to take over the Church?].” (p. 4)

The original Greek in verse 7 is translated as follows in various Bibles:

“Until he be taken out of the midst” (*Bullinger's Companion Bible*)

“only he restraining now, until out of (the) midst it comes” (*Green's Literal Translation*)

“[but it is] restrained only until he who restrains is taken out of the way” (*Amplified Bible*)

“only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way” (*Revised*

⁶ There are many other Scriptures one can turn to, to support the above admonishment: Acts 20:30-31; Rom 16:17-18; Gal 1:6-7; 3:1; Col 2:4, 8; IIThess 2:2-7; ITim 3:6; 4:7; IITim 1:15 (ie apostasies); 3:6-9, 13 (he is saying do not be deceived like this ...), 10 (... but know the doctrines. Cp 4:3).

Standard Version)

Refer to the article *A Short Note on II Thess 2:6-7 and being "out of the way"* for more detailed information.

Some years later I noted the following in the article on the *Babylonian Conspiracy*:

"11.6.88:

Above written in 1981! Seven years ago!!! Amazing!" (p. 4)

I wrote that because I was suspecting that the end-time Church would parallel the first century church in many ways which would include apostasy given my studies. In addition, a study of the history of ancient Israel also shows sequences of apostasies and revivals which typed the Church. Why wouldn't something similar not occur in the last days?

Further, I noted:

"II Thess 2:1-7 [was Simon Magus and his followers the man/men of sin of 1st century, after the dying of Peter, Paul, then John? Were they "taken out of the way" permitting the Babylonian takeover of the Early Church?]" (p. 4)

While in the handwritten notes *End Time Apostasy in the True Church* I noted:

"Based on the above prophecies and various types in Ezra-Nehemiah, Zechariah, Malachi, the Temple, House of God, Remnant of Israel, Zion etc, it seems that a further "falling away" may yet occur ... Will there be yet another "falling away? – with the flock being scattered? A mere remnant remaining? ... Thus the falling aways of 1st century onwards (whether of groups or individuals) are mere types ... of what may yet occur again!?" (pp. 4-5)

No special insights are required to anticipate this would happen after Herbert Armstrong's death. It was all too obvious for the following reasons:

- The Scriptures clearly show that fallings away occur regularly
- The behaviours of so many ministers and members had a lot to be desired and one could see that something was just not right
- Keeping a chronological diary of events from the death of Mr Armstrong onward led me to the conclusion that an apostasy was afoot. Such was not the Laodicean Era at all, but something far more sinister was obviously developing I am sure that others would have been wary of what was going on in the Worldwide Church of God, early on after the passing of Herbert W Armstrong.

Further proofs of a conspiracy that occurred in the old Worldwide Church of God by the Synagogue of Satan is found at [this site](#).

I trust that this Bible study has been of some interest and assists in identifying and avoiding apostasy

in one's own life as well as in the Church.

Bibliography

Barnes, A. (c 1850).	<i>Notes on the Whole Bible.</i> www.studydrive.com/commentaries/bnb.html
Bromily, G. W. (ed). (1995)	"Apostasy; Apostate", <i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i> (vol. 1). W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI.
Bullinger, E. W. (1921).	<i>Companion Bible.</i> Samuel Bagster and Sons Ltd, London.
Fausset, A. R. (et al) (1997.)	<i>A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments</i> by R Jamieson, AR Fausset and D Brown, Logos Research Systems, Oak Harbour, WA. (original 1877)
Fee, G. D. (2009).	<i>The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians, The New International Commentary on the New Testament.</i> Wm B Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.
Gill, J (1746-63).	<i>Exposition of the Whole Bible.</i> https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/
Hendrickson, W. (1979).	<i>Exposition of I and II Thessalonians, I and II Timothy and Titus, New Testament Commentary.</i> Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI.
Marshall, I. H. (et al). (1996).	<i>New Bible Dictionary.</i> IVP Academic, Downers Grove, IL.
Olson, S. G. (1986).	<i>The Apostasy of the Lost Century.</i> Nordica S. F. Ltd.
Rupert, G. G. (c1915).	<i>The Seven Churches.</i> Union Publishing Co, Britton, Oklahoma.
Strong, J. (1890).	<i>Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.</i>
Thomas, R. L. (1978).	<i>1 & 2 Thessalonians, Expositors Bible Commentary, Vol.11.</i> Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.
White, C. M. (1981).	<i>The Babylonian Conspiracy in the First Century True Church of God.</i> (handwritten study)
White, C. M. (1983).	<i>End Time Apostasy in the True Church.</i> (hand written study)
White, C. M. (1988).	<i>Apostasy Now! Falling away from true doctrine.</i> (hand written study)
	<i>Amplified Bible.</i>
	<i>English Standard Version of the Bible.</i>
	<i>Green's Literal Translation.</i>
	<i>King James Version of the Bible.</i>
	<i>Young's Literal Translation of the Bible.</i>

Christian Apostasy: A Conscious Defection from the Christian Faith

1 Timothy 6:3-10

Apostasy = A deliberate departure, defection, revolt or rebellion

“A willful failing away from or rebellion against Christianity. It is the rejection of Christ by one who has been a Christian ...” Zondervan Encyclopedia