

The Christian Church in Apostasy

by Steve Barwick

The English word “apostasy” isn’t used anywhere in the New Testament of the King James Version of the Bible. But the Greek word *apostasia* is used twice in the ancient manuscripts from which the New Testament of the KJV was translated.

In II Thessalonians 2:1-4, where St. Paul is teaching how to understand the proper timing of the Lord’s Second Advent and our gathering back to Him, the Greek word *apostasia* is translated into the English language as “falling away.” And it’s translated as “forsake” in the other case, in Acts 21:21, where St. Paul is being falsely accused by the Jewish religious leaders of forsaking the Law of Moses.

But with all due respect to the translators, the actual definition of the Greek word *apostasia* is much richer in meaning than their translations convey. Indeed, as you’re about to discover, the word is extremely interesting when you examine it more closely and take its meaning in full context with the Scriptures in which it’s used.

For example, in II Thessalonians 2:1-4, St. Paul uses the word *apostasia* in his explanation about our gathering back to Christ at His Second Advent. Paul explains that our gathering back to the Lord cannot take place until *first* there comes a great falling away (apostasy) from the truth among Christians as Satan in his role as the false messiah is revealed on this earth, seating himself on the temple mount in Jerusalem and calling himself “God.”

We’ll examine those verses in more detail in just a moment, so we can learn about that very dramatic example of apostasy and discover how it pertains to us as Christians in the final days of this flesh earth age in which we now live. But before we do so, let’s take a quick look at the Strong’s Concordance definition for the Greek word *apostasia* and see what more we can learn about this most interesting word:

G646

ἀποστασία

apostasia

ap-os-tas-ee'-ah

Feminine of the same as G647; **defection from truth (properly the state)**, (apostasy): - falling away, forsake.

As you can see, the Greek word *apostasia* means a “defection from truth.” And properly, it means to be in the state of *having already defected from the truth*.

In other words, a Christian who's in a state of apostasy is, in essence, *living a lie*. That distinction is critical to understand because it strongly implies that in the state of apostasy, the truth is abandoned for the specific purpose of embracing a lie.

You can also see in the Strong's Concordance definition above that the Greek word *apostasia* is derived from another Greek word, *apostasion*. Let's take a look at what the Strong's Concordance has to say about that word:

G647

ἀποστάσιον

apostasion

ap-os-tas'-ee-on

Neuter of a (presumed) adjective from a derivative of G868; properly something *separative*, that is, **(specifically) divorce: - (writing of) divorcement.**

As you can see, the Greek word *apostasion* specifically means to “divorce.” So it follows that the Greek word *apostasia*, taken in proper context with the word it's derived from, *apostasion*, essentially means *to divorce the truth*.

By implication, it means to *divorce the truth in order to marry a lie*. In other words, apostasy means to turn away from one thing and to cling to another in its place. It means to defect from one side to another. Spiritually speaking, to commit apostasy is to turn from the truth and cling to a lie *in place of the truth*.

Why? Because when you divorce the truth, you don't just end up in some void. You divorce the truth for a *reason*. And that's because you've found something to replace it -- something you *think* is true which leads you to forsake that which you originally knew to be true. We'll see shortly how this has *already happened* in Christianity, historically, and how II Thessalonians 2:1-4 reveals the depths of this ongoing apostasy.

Finally, as you can see in the Strong's definition of the Greek word *apostasion*, it too is a derivative word, coming from the Greek word *aphistēmi*, meaning “to actively instigate revolt.”

G868

ἀφίστημι

aphistēmi

af-is'-tay-mee

From G575 and G2476; to *remove*, that is, **(actively) instigate to revolt**; usually (reflexively) to *desist, desert*, etc.: - depart, draw (fall) away, refrain, withdraw self.

So when you understand the Greek root words from which the word *apostasia* is derived, you can see with greater clarity its much richer meaning. It's not just a "falling away" or a "forsaking" as the King James Bible translators would have you believe. The translators were just trying to simplify things. But the word means outright *revolt* against God's Word of truth, resulting in divorce from that truth, which in turn leads to a spiritual marriage with a *substitute truth*, which is to say, with a lie that's being taught as truth.

As you'll discover when we examine II Thessalonians 2:1-4 in greater detail directly below, such lies are usually based on unsubstantiated church doctrine that have been substituted in place of what God's Word actually says, and have been embraced, often unwittingly, by Christians as if they were the truth.

St. Paul on the Great Apostasy

Indeed, a careful examination of II Thessalonians 2:1-4 reveals what is perhaps the most prominent example of ongoing apostasy in all of Christianity today – an apostasy that's actually 187 years old, and is growing stronger throughout Christianity each day. So let's examine Paul's words and see what he had to say about this apostasy:

2Th 2:1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,

The word "by" in this verse, which is used twice, should be properly translated "regarding." Paul is basically saying, "I'm begging you, brothers, *regarding* the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *regarding* our gathering together unto Him..."

In other words, the subject matter of Paul's lesson is Christ's second coming to this earth and our gathering back together unto Him at that time.

2Th 2:2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, **nor by letter as from us**, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

Basically, Paul is saying to the Thessalonians that they should not get all shook up thinking that the day of the Lord's return, and our gathering back to Him, is at hand. Paul admonishes them to not allow any spirit, nor word from any man, nor even a letter from him (in reference to his *first* letter to the Thessalonians) shake them up into believing that Christ's Second Advent is imminent.

You see, in chapter 4 of St. Paul's *first* letter to the Thessalonians, he had explained that the dead in Christ are already with Christ in heaven, having returned to Him after dying, as all faithful Christians do. And he noted that they will therefore accompany Christ back to this earth at His Second Advent. But that letter confused some readers into believing the Lord's Second Advent was imminent. Therefore, Paul wrote this second letter to the Thessalonians, in part, to clarify

what he'd previously written about Christ's Second Advent. As you'll see, he explains that the day of our gathering together to Christ cannot take place until *two* very specific events occur.

Yet most Christians today make the mistake of focusing on chapter 4 of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, and ignoring this vital clarification from Paul in his second letter. Let's see which two events St. Paul explains must happen first, *before* the Lord can return with His saints to gather His faithful Christians together with Him:

2Th 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day* shall not come, *except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;*

"That day" is the day spoken of in verse one, i.e., the day of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him.

First, it's important to note here that the subject matter is *deception*. Paul is telling the Christians from Thessalonica that people, or even false spirits (vs. 2), will try to *deceive* them into thinking that our gathering back to the Lord can happen at any moment. Regarding this subject, he says "Let no man deceive you by any means..."

Yet that's exactly what Christians have been deceived into believing *today*, i.e., that Jesus can return "at any moment now." In fact, the "Jesus can return at any moment now" doctrine is perhaps the predominant doctrine of the Christian religion *even though it directly contradicts Paul's teachings in the above three verses*.

Paul then proceeds to explain the *two* events that must take place first, *before* the Lord's Second Advent and *before* our gathering back to Him can occur. The very first event he mentions in the verse above is a "falling away." This English term is translated from our Greek word *apostacia*, meaning a defection from the truth, or more accurately, in context, a *divorce* from the truth in order to cleave to a lie.

In other words, St. Paul admonishes Christians that before our gathering back to the Lord can take place there will be a widespread defection from the truth among Christians. After all, Christians are the only ones who have the truth in the first place (i.e., Jesus Christ is the truth). So Christians are the only ones who can *defect* from the truth. So this apostasy will be committed by *Christians*. And as you're about to see, most Christians are already in the midst of it.

The second event Paul describes is that the "man of sin be revealed," whom Paul further refers to as "the son of perdition." These are both direct references to Satan. We'll examine Satan's arrival to this earth in just a moment. But first, take a look at the word "and" that divides those two events, i.e., "...except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition..."

The word translated "and" in this case is the Greek word *kai* (i.e., Strong's G-2532). It's *copulative* in nature. That means you have to *couple it* to the previous thought. The "falling

away” and the revelation of “that man of sin...the son of perdition” are events that take place simultaneously. They are coupled, or bound together. They are copulative.

In other words, *before* our gathering back to the Lord can take place, a defection from the truth must *first* take place. And that defection from the truth is *directly connected* to the appearance on this earth of that “man of sin...the son of perdition” – referring to Satan himself in his role as the false messiah, or antichrist.

So Christ’s second coming, and our gathering back to Him at that time, simply cannot take place until first there comes a great defection from the truth as Satan arrives to this earth, seats himself on the temple mount at Jerusalem – on Mt. Zion – and proclaims himself to be “God.”

There are no ifs, ands or buts about it. Paul is begging the Thessalonians to grasp this simple fact. Satan comes to this earth *first*, before the Lord’s Second Advent and our gathering back to the Lord can take place. And Christians will apostatize to Satan, meaning, they’ll embrace him as their “God” *in place of the Lord Jesus Christ*, as you’ll see more clearly the further we get into this study.

Paul goes on to explain exactly what’s going to happen when this “man of sin...the son of perdition” is revealed:

2Th 2:4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

In other words, when this “man of sin” is revealed, he seats himself on Mt. Zion in Jerusalem – the historic home of the temple of God -- and proclaims himself to be God. In doing so, he opposes the true God. And he exalts himself above the true God and above everything else worshipped as God by the people of this world. Furthermore, he makes a spectacular show of himself.

In short, this “man of sin...the son of perdition” is going to be a miracle-working supernatural being. A big show-off. As it’s written of him in Revelation 13:13-14:

“And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.”

So when St. Paul warns in II Thessalonians 2:1-4 that Christ’s second advent and our gathering back together unto Him cannot take place until *first* there comes a falling away (i.e., a defection from the truth in direct conjunction with the arrival of “that man of sin...the son of perdition”) he’s actually speaking of the fulfillment of Isaiah 14:13-14.

As it’s written in those verses of Satan and his grandiose but thoroughly evil plans:

Isa 14:13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

Isa 14:14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

In other words, both St. Paul in II Thessalonians 2:1-4 and the prophet Isaiah in the verses directly above are referring to Satan's big power grab. At the very end of this flesh earth age in which we now live, just *before* Christ's return to this earth and our gathering back together with Him, Satan arrives to this earth first and puts on a big, miracle-working show at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. And on that spot he proclaims himself to be "God."

St. Paul is *very* clear about this, and warns us that we're not to let any man, or any spirit or any letter (even one from him) tell us that it will happen any differently. There is no "Jesus can return at any moment now" doctrine in the Bible. It's a man-made church tradition that's been embraced in place of the truth of God's Word. And because Christians believe this lie, in place of the clearly-stated Bible truth, it will directly lead them to worship the first supernatural being who sets foot on this earth at Mt. Zion in Jerusalem working great miracles and claiming to be "God."

If you carefully examine the above verses from the book of Isaiah, you'll see that Satan essentially says that his plan is to ascend to power in heaven and rise in power above all of God's children, as if he were God himself. In other words, he's going to make a power grab. He wants to take over God's very throne in the heavens.

Furthermore, he claims for himself ownership of "the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north." This is a direct reference to Psalm 48:2, which tells us that God's favorite place on this earth is Jerusalem, and in particular, mount Zion – the temple mount -- which the Psalmist refers to as "mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King." As it's written:

Psa 48:2 Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.

In short, it's mount Zion upon which God's throne is to be placed when He returns to this earth. But Satan is claiming that spot for himself. And as St. Paul warns in II Thessalonians 2:1-4, which we've already examined, Satan indeed arrives to this earth *in advance* of Jesus Christ and seats himself on that mount, "in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God."

Why Satan's Failure in Heaven Leads to Christian Apostasy on Earth

Thankfully, however, Revelation 12:7-11 explains *exactly* what's going to happen when Satan attempts this power grab, in heaven first, and on earth second.

The Scripture tells us that in heaven, Satan and his fallen angels are going to lose their battle to overthrow God's throne. And as you'll discover in just a moment, they're going to get their rear-

ends handed to them on a silver platter by God's good and faithful angels under the direct command of Michael the archangel. They're going to be cast out of heaven, and down to this earth.

And once Satan and his evil angels are cast down from heaven to this earth and try to take God's *earthly* seat at Mt. Zion, they're going to run into some very stiff opposition from God's elect who will not apostatize from God's Word (i.e., will not divorce the truth in order to marry the lie), and who know in advance exactly what to expect. As it's written:

Rev 12:7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

This is where Satan – the dragon -- tries to overthrow our heavenly Father and take His throne, exactly as it's written in Isaiah 14:13-14.

Rev 12:8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

Satan and his fallen angels lose that heavenly battle. They're simply no match for Michael the archangel and for God's other faithful angels under Michael's command.

Rev 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, **which deceiveth the whole world**: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Satan and his fallen angels will be banished from heaven at that point, and will be cast down to this earth, at which time they'll try to take our heavenly Father's *earthly* seat in Jerusalem, on Mt. Zion, by proclaiming themselves to be God and his angels. But it's a deception. And with the exception of Christ's faithful elect, the "whole world" will fall for this deception, as the verse above explains (i.e., "which deceiveth the whole world").

Rev 12:10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

As you can see once again, verse 10 above demonstrates that it's only AFTER Satan and his fallen angels are cast out of heaven and down to this earth that Christ's Second Advent to this earth can take place.

Before Christ arrives, bringing "salvation, strength, and the kingdom of our God," Satan will have a very short time on this earth (Rev. 12:12) to pull off his deception and to draw as many Christians as he can into a state of apostasy. That is, he'll cause Christians to reject the truth of God's Word and embrace *him* as their Lord and Savior.

This is God's test to see which Christians have been listening to His Word, and which Christians have been listening to church traditions like the "Jesus can come at any moment now" doctrine *instead* of His Word.

In other words, most Christians are already ripe for apostasy because they've been led to believe that "Jesus can come at any moment now" – this, in direct contradiction of Paul's warnings not to let any man deceive you into thinking Christ's Second Advent can take place before "there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition."

Unfortunately, these misled Christians will indeed believe this miracle-working supernatural being is their Lord and Savior. They'll unwittingly worship him as "God." But as it's written, God's elect on this earth will stand firm against Satan "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony," and will overcome his great deception.

Rev 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

No rapture, folks. Just faithful Christian overcomers standing firmly against the evil one in the shed blood of the Lamb and the testimony of the Word of God. Unafraid of Satan and his fallen angels, and unwilling to bow to Satan's deception.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of Christians will fall away into apostasy at this point. Not because they're bad people. But because they've been led to believe by their pastors that "Jesus can come at any moment now." So, being more familiar with church tradition than they are with their Father's Word, when Satan and his fallen angels arrive to this earth working great miracles from Mt. Zion at Jerusalem, most Christians will think they're witnessing the second advent of Jesus Christ.

Quick Review

So, just to get that timeline straight in your head once again, St. Paul warns us in II Thessalonians 2:1-4 that *before* our gathering back to Christ can take place, first there must come a great falling away (apostasy) coupled with the arrival to this earth of that man of sin, the son of perdition, who's going to seat himself on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem (in imitation of Christ's second advent) where he will portray himself as the Most High God.

It's that simple. Yet Christians of this final generation have it all backwards. They believe Christ can come at "any moment now" and rapture the Christian church up into heaven. Then, they claim, a man possessed by the spirit of antichrist will rise up in Jerusalem and take over the world. Then they claim Christ comes to this earth again – essentially a third advent -- with his raptured saints in order to defeat this human antichrist.

Not one word of this church tradition can be documented in the Scriptures, though the proponents of such tradition endlessly torture the Scriptures in order to try to make them fit.

But the bottom line is that Christians of today are already (albeit unwittingly) *living a lie*. They're living in apostasy. They've *already* defected from the truth of God's Word, because their preachers, in direct contradiction of St. Paul's teachings in II Thessalonians 2:104, have

repeatedly taught them that “Jesus can come at any moment now.” And most Christians believe this deceptive church tradition over the Word of God itself.

Unfortunately, the “Jesus can come at any moment now” doctrine sets Christians up to worship the first supernatural being who sets foot on this earth at mount Zion working miracles and proclaiming himself to be “God.” It’s the very antichrist himself.

But Christians won’t realize it when it happens because they’ve never been taught God’s Word correctly. They’re taught empty church tradition *in place* of God’s Word. They’ve unwittingly abandoned the truth of God’s Word on this matter, and have married a lie.

187 Years of Apostasy

Christianity is almost 2,000 years old. So it’s important to note that the rapture theory, and its concurrent “Jesus can come at any moment now” tradition, is only about 187 years old.

In other words, for the first 1,800-plus years of Christianity the rapture theory simply did not exist. Not a single church father taught it. Not one. And none of them preached the “Jesus can come at any moment now” tradition, either.

These two ideas only became official church tradition in the 1830’s after a woman named Margaret McDonald had a vision in which the rapture notion and its concurrent “Jesus can come at any moment now” tradition were revealed to her.

In spite of the fact that Margaret McDonald admitted she felt sick and full of revulsion as the vision came upon her, several preachers listening to her discuss the vision decided to adopt it into their church teachings. They began teaching it from the pulpits and soon found their churches full of eager listeners. And thus, the rapture doctrine and its concurrent “Jesus can come at any moment now” tradition were born.

Both quickly became official church tradition, displacing the original Biblical teachings regarding Christ’s Second Advent and our gathering together unto Him. In other words, mass Christian *apostasy* was instilled into the Christian church with the rapture theory and the “Jesus can come at any moment now” tradition.

And as generations of Christians grew up in churches that teach these erroneous and completely unbiblical notions, it became – in their minds – “God’s Word.” But in reality, it’s just a *substitute* for what God’s Word actually says.

In other words, today many (and I dare say, *most*) Christians have unwittingly divorced the truth to marry what is clearly and unequivocally a lie -- the lie that “Jesus can come at any moment now.”

It’s an apostasy of staggering proportions. And it leads directly to that *great apostasy* spoken of by St. Paul in II Thessalonians 2:1-4, that takes place when Satan arrives to this earth in his guise as the false Christ (antichrist) and seats himself on mount Zion proclaiming himself to be “God.”

It's not within the scope of this study to go any further into the Margaret McDonald rapture story. But if you haven't read the historical research on it yet, consider getting a copy of the book, *The Incredible Cover Up*, by Christian researcher Dave MacPherson. Newer editions of the book are titled *The Rapture Plot*, if memory serves me correctly.

The bottom line is that it took just 187 years of false teaching to upend 1,800 years of Christianity, substituting a bald-faced lie in place of 1800 years worth of truth in regards to the Lord's Second Coming.

And when Satan in his role as the false Christ arrives to this earth working miracles from mount Zion, it will only take about *five minutes* for most Christians to be sucked into his orbit, thinking his arrival is the fulfillment of Christ's Second Advent.

At that point, the creeping apostasy that began 187 years ago inside the Christian church will be complete. The divorce from the truth and the marriage to the lie foretold by St. Paul will be fulfilled as Christians unwittingly leave the truth of the Lord's Word in droves in order to be spiritually wed to the miracle-working false Christ.

Then our heavenly Father's Word in II Thessalonians 2:8-13 will also come to pass, as Christians reject God's Word with finality in favor of the dragon's lies. As St. Paul further wrote in chapter 2 of his second letter to the Thessalonians:

2Th 2:5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

Here, Paul is writing to the Thessalonians, in essence, "Don't you remember that I explained all of this to you before, when I was visiting with you?"

2Th 2:6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

The word "withholdeth" in this verse is translated from the Greek word *katecho* (i.e., Strong's G-2722), meaning to "hold down" or "hold back," i.e., to prevent something from happening. In other words, the subject matter is Christ's Second Advent and what's holding it up from taking place.

The word "time" in this verse is translated from the Greek word *kairos* (i.e., Strong's G-2540), meaning a "set time" or "season."

Paul is telling the Thessalonians, in essence, "Now you know what's holding up Christ's Second Advent. Before it can happen, the devil must be revealed in his set time."

2Th 2:7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

The word "letteth" and the word "let" in the above verse are translated from the same Greek that was translated "withholdeth" in verse six above. Paul is saying, in essence, "The iniquity you

see in the world today is leading up to all of the things I've been telling you about; but he that's holding up the show will continue to do so until he's taken out of the way."

In other words, until Satan and his fallen angels are kicked out of heaven by Michael the archangel, Christ cannot come to this earth and gather us together unto Himself. Satan must show up *first*. That's what's holding things up.

Paul couldn't be any clearer. Christ's Second Advent and our gathering together unto Him are being held up until Satan is kicked out of heaven and comes to this earth to work his great deception. When the war in heaven (Revelation 12:7) starts in earnest as Satan tries to overthrow God's throne there, he will be booted out of heaven unto this earth. Only after that occurs can Jesus Christ's Second Advent and our gathering together unto Him take place.

2Th 2:8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

Here, once again, you learn that Christ Jesus' Second Advent takes place AFTER the wicked one, Satan himself, arrives to this earth. The wicked one will be revealed, and then the Lord comes and consumes him "with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming."

2Th 2:9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

Paul continues to point out in no uncertain terms that Christ's Second Advent does not take place until "after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders."

And what kind of "power and signs and lying wonders" are we talking about? Just as it's explained in Revelation 13:13-14, when Satan arrives to this earth in his role as the false Christ, "...he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast..."

2Th 2:10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Make no mistake about it, the truth will be taught full force when Satan is on this earth. It will be taught by God's two faithful witnesses of Revelation chapter 11, and by God's elect who will back them up.

But as the verse above documents, the people of this earth will *reject* the truth outright in favor of the lie that stands before them on that Temple Mount "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness."

In other words, Christians have already been deceived into believing that the *first* miracle-working supernatural being who sets foot on this earth is their Lord and Savior, even though the

Scriptures in II Thessalonians 2:1-4 declare that he will be “that man of sin...the son of perdition,” which is to say, Satan himself. They have already divorced the truth of God’s Word on this matter and have embraced the lie of church tradition that tells them “Jesus can come at any moment now.”

And why do they so easily fall for the delusion that the miracle-working supernatural being standing on Mount Zion at that time is the Lord God, our Savior Jesus Christ?

It’s because “they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” They loved church tradition *more* than they loved the Word of God. They wouldn’t listen when people tried to show them Paul’s very clear explanation in II Thessalonians 2:1-4, that before Christ can return to this earth to gather His Christian servants back to him, *first* there must come a great falling away from the truth and that “man of sin...the son of perdition” must be revealed, exactly as it’s written.

You see, as a Christian, you either faithfully embrace and love the truth or you embrace and love the lie. And if you’re a believer in the church tradition that “Jesus can come at any moment now,” you’ve *already* embraced the lie, and you’ve *already* been set up to accept as your “God” the first miracle-working supernatural being who sets foot on this earth in Jerusalem, at Mt. Zion.

In short, even though St. Paul went to great lengths to explain it will be the devil himself who arrives to this earth first and seats himself on that temple mount in Jerusalem, calling himself “God,” most Christians simply will not listen. They’re too busy packing to fly away in a false “rapture” with their “Jesus who comes at any moment now.”

2Th 2:11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

Dr. Bullinger points out in his side notes in the Companion Bible that the proper translation of the last part of that verse is “that they should believe *the* lie” rather than “a lie.” In other words, it’s a very specific lie. Yes, this is the lie of 2 Thessalonians 2:4 that we studied earlier, i.e., Satan seating himself on the temple mount in Jerusalem, and proclaiming himself to be God.

This is the lie so many Christians will divorce the truth over, in order to marry the lie, which is to say, they’ll become spiritually wed to the false messiah during his false kingdom wedding which he’ll institute after he arrives, proclaiming himself to be the Lord of the heavens and the earth.

As I’ve taught many, many times, our heavenly Father is a “You asked for it, you got it” kind of guy. If you want to reject the truth and embrace delusional church tradition in its place, He’ll send you the delusion you seek.

Why? Because, like a parent who allows his child to touch a candle flame so the child will know what being burned means, our heavenly Father wants wayward Christians to experience for themselves the result of their chosen delusions, i.e., He wants them to experience the results of embracing empty church tradition over the truth of God’s Word.

2Th 2:12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Apostasy is *very* serious business, beloved. It puts your very soul at risk. You can end up damned (i.e., judiciously condemned under the law) because you've unwittingly rejected the source of all mercy and grace and truth, which is the Word of God.

So we thank God that He provides the Millennium teaching period after Christ's second advent for all of those wayward souls who will reject His Word and embrace the lie when Satan is on this earth putting on his big miracle show on the Temple Mount at Jerusalem.

2Th 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

God's elect will stand firmly in God's Word. They were chosen "from the beginning" because they believed the truth. This means they were chosen in the first heaven age during Satan's original rebellion against God, when one-third of God's children succumbed to Satan's deception (Rev. 12:4).

They will not embrace that miracle-working liar and his fallen angels when they arrive to Mt. Zion and put on their false salvation show, because they know in advance he's the fake. God's elect will know better than to bow to him in worship. And that's because they believe the truth and reject the church tradition lie of the "Jesus can come at any moment now" rapture doctrine.

Unfortunately, most Christians today want the softer, easier way out. Their rapture theory doctrine and their "any moment now Jesus" constitute their security blanket. They reject the fact that our heavenly Father has given us the Gospel armor in order to "stand against the fiery darts of Satan," not to fly away in fear of him. (Eph. 6:10-18).

We're given the Gospel armor because we're expected by our heavenly Father to take a stand on this earth, on His behalf, in the final days of this flesh earth age -- a faithful stand against a common enemy, Satan and his fallen angels.

So why do Christians so cringe in fear at the idea that they might have to take a stand against Satan and his fallen angels? After all, in Luke 10:19, Christ specifically stated, "*Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.*"

They cringe in fear, beloved, because *they don't believe what God's Word says*. They've allowed too many preachers behind pulpits to instill their minds with empty church traditions, to the point that when they actually hear God's Word being correctly taught, it sounds like a strange thing to them. It sounds like foreign doctrine.

Our Christian people *prefer* their escape pod rapture theory and their “any moment now Jesus” to the truth of God’s Word. Yet that rejected truth *is* the Gospel armor all Christians need to have on and firmly in place as this flesh earth age draws quickly to a close.

Faithful Christians have an obligation to stand against Satan when he arrives to this earth in his role as the false messiah, the antichrist, and seats himself on that Temple Mount proclaiming himself to be “God.”

As it’s further written, there will be joy in heaven when Satan’s plans to overthrow God’s throne are defeated, and Satan and his fallen angels are booted out of the heavens and down to this earth. But there will be great woe on this earth at that time, for Satan knows he must work his deception quickly, and suck in as many gullible Christians as he can having “but a short time” to do so. As it’s written:

Rev 12:12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! **for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.**

Rev 12:13 And **when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth**, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

Faithful Mary brought forth the man child, Jesus. Here, she is symbolic of God’s faithful elect who bear his Word of Truth in their bosoms, just as Mary faithfully bore the baby Jesus in hers. That old devil, the dragon, will target God’s most faithful elect. He despises them because they refuse to apostatize to him. They refuse to divorce the truth and marry the lie of church tradition that leads Christians to worship the first miracle-working supernatural being who sets foot on this earth at Mt. Zion.

Rev 12:14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

This is not a “rapture.” Our heavenly Father knows how to take care of His faithful servants. He is that great eagle of Deuteronomy 32:10-12, who led Jacob and His People Israel through the treacherous wilderness and kept safe from all harm.

As it’s written in those verses in Deuteronomy 32 regarding God’s nurturing protection of His People in the wilderness, “*As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.*”

He didn’t rapture Jacob or the people of Israel out. He led them through the wilderness, providing the cloud above them during the day to keep the hot sun off their backs, and the pillar of fire at night to drive back both evil beasts and enemy forces alike.

As it was in the wilderness of the Old Testament time of Jacob and Israel, so it shall be again, in the spiritual wilderness of the final days of this flesh earth age. God didn't fly His people away. His being referred to as a great eagle is a euphemism meaning He stuck with them, His presence always hovering over their camp, and He protected them as a mother eagle protects her helpless young in the nest.

God's faithful servants will be thoroughly nourished in God's Word, as long as they keep their face in the Book each day, instead of listening to church tradition. It's only through knowing and believing the truth of God's Word that one can make his or her faithful stand against the evil one during his coming time of great deception.

Rev 12:15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

This is Satan's flood of lies, targeting God's faithful Christian people, and hoping to carry away as many as possible into deception. Just as Christ's words are the "living water," so the words that proceed from Satan's mouth at that time constitute the flood waters of deception that lead to apostasy and death. Satan will flood this earth with his deception, in hopes of snaring as many of God's Christian people as possible in his lies.

But God's faithful servants – His elect -- will not fall for it.

Rev 12:16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

No rapture. The entire spiritual battle happens right here on this earth. But as I stated, our heavenly Father knows how to take care of His faithful servants. God's elect will be protected from the apostasy that the rest of the world will so enthusiastically embrace, and that Christians in large part *already* embrace in their misguided adherence to the "Jesus can come at any moment now" rapture doctrine. While the whole world will be deceived (Rev. 12:9) God's faithful elect will not.

Rev 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Again, no rapture, here, beloved. It's out-and-out spiritual warfare: Satan against God's elect. As Christians, we're all on this earth to make a spiritual stand for our Lord and Savior. Christ has not yet arrived at this point in the Scriptures. And God's faithful servants are not flying away. We're going to remain on the watch, standing firmly in God's Word of truth, and kick some dragon, instead, spiritually speaking. We will not bow the knee to the wicked one.

But as it's written in Luke 21:16, God's elect will be delivered up to persecution by their own Christian brothers and sisters:

“And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls.”

If you think it through, you'll understand that when Satan is here on this earth putting on his big miracle show from Mt. Zion, God's faithful elect will be charged with apostasy – the penalty for which is death. For refusing to bow the knee to Satan, they'll be delivered up by family members and friends. Indeed, they'll be delivered up by the very people *actually committing apostasy* against God by embracing that miracle-working false messiah.

But at those trials, when it's time for God's elect to testify, our heavenly Father will speak through their mouths and the whole world will be bowled over by the truth that comes forth. As it's written in Luke 21:12-15, *“But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.”*

At that time, the truth is going to hit deceived Christians between the eyes like a two-by-four as God speaks through His faithful elect at those trials. As it's written of that time in Isaiah 25:7:

“And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations.”

That means He's going to wake them up to the deception they've become so enmeshed in. He's going to take the blinders off, so to speak. They're going to see and understand, perhaps for the first time ever, that in embracing empty church tradition over the truth of God's Word, they unwittingly ended up worshipping the very enemy of God.

There's no rapture out. The only two choices are to embrace apostasy (i.e., divorce the truth and marry the lie) or to stand firm in God's Word to the very end against Satan and his deception. And very few will do so, because they don't want to be hated. As it's written in the great book of Mark, chapter 13:

Mar 13:13 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but **he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.**

The word “endure” in the above verse is translated from the Greek word *hupomena* (Strong's G-5278). And it means to “remain behind.” So the proper translation is “but he that shall *remain behind unto the end*, the same shall be saved.” Again, there's no rapture out. You've got to faithfully “remain behind unto the end” in order to be saved.

People have written books full of great, swelling words admonishing Christians not to be “left behind.” Yet your heavenly Father's very Word tells you that remaining behind until the end is your *destiny* if you're one of His faithful Christian servants. Unfortunately, most Christians will

allow themselves to be harvested out of season to the false Christ before the Lord's Second Advent and our gathering together unto Him can take place.

In other words, you've got to make it all of the way through the tribulation of antichrist in order to be saved. It's at the *very end* of the great tribulation that Christ arrives to deliver His faithful servants from the clutches of the evil one. As Christ Himself taught in chapter 24 of the great book of Matthew:

Mat 24:29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

Mat 24:30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Mat 24:31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

As St. Paul so clearly explained in II Thessalonians 2:1-4, and as St. Matthew explains in the verses directly above, Christ does not arrive to this earth and gather His faithful servants to His side until AFTER the great tribulation, which is to say, until *after* Satan arrives to this earth to pull off his great deception.

So listen to God's Word, and reject any church tradition that contradicts it. Don't allow yourself to be taken down by Satan's flood of lies when he arrives to this earth. Remember St. Paul's warning that our gathering back to the Lord *cannot* take place until that great apostasy coupled with Satan's arrival to Mt. Zion in Jerusalem are completed.

In Summary

To sum up, the apostasy has been ongoing since the introduction of the rapture theory and the "Jesus can come at any moment now" doctrine in 1830.

Christians long ago began divorcing the truth of God's Word in order to marry the lie that "Jesus can come at any moment now." And because of it, they've now been set up to accept as their Lord and Savior – their very "God" – the first miracle-working supernatural being who sets foot on this earth at mount Zion in Jerusalem, promising salvation.

The great apostasy will culminate when our old adversary the devil sets foot on this earth and seats himself on that Temple Mount, proclaiming himself to be "God."

The Scripture says that with the exception of God's faithful elect, Satan will "deceive the whole world" (Revelation 12:9) into believing in him.

The question is, whose side will you be on at that time? The side of empty church tradition that leads Christians to unwittingly reject God's Word and fall straight into the hands of the antichrist? Or the side that enthusiastically puts on that Gospel armor of Ephesians chapter six, and takes their stand against the "fiery darts of Satan" when he arrives to this earth with his fallen angels?

Put On Your Gospel Armor NOW

As it's written in chapter six of the great book of Ephesians:

Eph 6:10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

The power of the Lord's might is His Word of truth. Be strong in it. You're not going anywhere. Jesus cannot come "any moment now" and rapture you out before the devil arrives, because He *cannot* and *will not* violate His own Word.

Eph 6:11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

That's our job. We are to put on the "whole armor of God" (i.e., the truth of God's Word) and take our stand against the trickery and deception of the devil when he arrives to this earth just *before* the Lord's Second Advent, and tries to take God's favorite place on Mt. Zion for himself.

Eph 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Our enemies are Satan and his fallen angels, who want us to believe that they are God and His holy angels.

Eph 6:13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

The "evil day" is the day of Satan's arrival to this earth. It's the start of the great tribulation. There's no flying away. No rapture. We, as faithful Christians, are to put on the "whole armor of God" in order to "withstand" (i.e., stand against) the devil in that very evil day. We are to take our stand for God at that time. It's our very *destiny* to do so. It is written. And so it shall be.

Eph 6:14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

That's the only alternative to apostasy. Stick with the truth, straight from God's Word. Put on the righteousness of Christ who refused to allow the devil to deceive Him when the devil tempted Him in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights (Mt. 4:1).

Eph 6:15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

Jesus saves. And there's no other who can. That's the Gospel message. So don't fall for the apostasy. Don't divorce the Gospel truth in order to marry the antichrist lie.

Eph 6:16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

Again, no rapture. We're going to be here when it all goes down. And Satan is going to fire his darts of deception at us. And we're going to stand firmly in our faith in God's Word in order to quench "all the fiery darts of the wicked."

Eph 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

The word "take" in the above verse is translated from the Greek word *dechomai* (i.e., Strong's G-1209). It simply means "to receive." Do you remember, earlier, when we looked at II Thessalonians 2:10, we learned that those who ultimately perish did so because they "received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved"?

The word "received" in that verse is the same Greek word, *dechomai*. We must receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. But we cannot receive it if we crowd it out of our hearts and minds with empty church tradition that contradict God's Word of truth.

Eph 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Those are the duties of the faithful elect of God, beloved. They are *your* duties, as a faithful Christian.

There is no rapture. And the "Jesus" who can come "at any moment now" is in reality the devil...the antichrist...the false messiah who arrives with his fallen angels to this earth at Mount Zion in Jerusalem and seats himself there, proclaiming himself to be "God."

Abide in the Lord

In closing, it's important to keep in mind that Christians are supposed to *abide* in Christ Jesus. And we abide in Him through His Word. His Word is our spiritual lifeblood. If we apostatize from His Word by substituting empty church tradition in its place, we stand to lose our eternal life. As Christ stated in John 15:4-6:

Joh 15:4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

Joh 15:5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: **for without me ye can do nothing.**

Joh 15:6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

What this essentially means is that Jesus Christ is the very source of all life, including *yours* and *mine*. We cannot live without Him. Spiritually speaking, He's the Vine of Life. And the sap of that Vine – the very lifeblood, which is His Word -- flows through us, the branches of that Holy vine, in order to keep us alive and to give us the spiritual nutrition that's needed so we can bear fruit on His behalf.

That means *His* spiritual lifeblood – His Word of Truth, His doctrine – must flow through *you* in order for you to live eternally and bear fruit on His behalf. No other doctrine can do the trick. Your life is tied directly to His life in what you might think of as a spiritual marriage through His Word.

Spiritually speaking, the two – you and the Lord -- become *one* with each other through His Word. Together, *in and through His Word*, we become that many-membered body of Christ. All for One, and One for all. Spiritually speaking we are the wife of Christ. But *apostasy* – a divorce from the truth of His Word in order to marry a lie (i.e., false doctrine/empty church tradition) -- robs you of your opportunity for eternal life.

You might otherwise be a very good person. You might give to charity. You might be kind to your neighbors. You might love puppies and kitty cats. You might attend church every Wednesday evening and twice every Sunday. But *none* of that matters if you divorce the truth of God's Word in order to embrace a substitute doctrine that's not part of God's Word and that leads to the worship of the antichrist, no matter how inadvertent. That's the spiritual equivalent of *suicide*. There's no life-giving spiritual nourishment in false doctrine.

The bottom line is that without the truth of God's Word flowing through the branches (i.e., Christians) of the vine (i.e., Christ), the branches wither up and die, and are broken off the vine and cast into fire as worthless because they cannot bear fruit for the Lord. That's the consequence of apostasy, beloved. Loss of eternal life.

I wanted to bring those verses into focus for you so that you'd understand with more depth and clarity the concept of apostasy and its very dire consequences. Stick with the truth of His Word. It is your very lifeline. It is written. And so it shall come to pass. And there is no other Word that can save you but His.

-- End --

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