

Apostasy

(Priest Lesson April 2015 – Roald Peterson)

Introduction

This lesson discusses the meaning of apostasy for individuals and groups, when it has happened, when it will happen in the future, why it happens, what it means for you, what it means for the church, what it means for the world, how to become an apostate, how to not become an apostate, etc.

Meaning of Apostasy

- The word apostasy comes from the Greek word *apostasia*, meaning defection, departure, revolt or rebellion. It applies to individuals or groups who abandon their loyalty to a cause. It is usually used to indicate rebellion against a religious faith. We define it as rebellion against the teachings and laws of God, and abandoning covenants made between God and his people. It can come about consciously and willfully, or by inattention to our covenants as we worship or pursue things or lifestyles contrary to the gospel.

The Great Apostasy

- The Great Apostasy refers to the loss of essential doctrines, laws, and authority of the church established by Jesus Christ during his mortal ministry. Looking at the churches existing in our time we see five historical possibilities:
 1. The story of Christ and his Gospel are not true, and there was nothing to lose.
 2. The true church of Christ was established, there was no apostasy, and the oldest Christian church is true. Problems: Changes in doctrine, organization, practices, and bad history.
 3. There was an apostasy from the true church, reformers (Luther, Calvin, etc.) returned the church to its true form through the Reformation, and modern Protestantism is the true church of Christ. Problem: Which one is true? What about authority?
 4. There was apostasy & the church was lost forever. Problem: prophecies of restoration & last days.
 5. Following a universal apostasy, God restored the church with its original teachings, laws, and authority. This is the belief of the Mormons.
- Biblical sources predict a universal apostasy.
 - The church and kingdom of God would be established and then driven from the earth.
- ? The early church escaped destruction of Jerusalem by Rome in A.D. 70. Egypt was 90% Christian by A.D. 100. Christianity was eventually made to state religion of Rome and spread throughout the empire. So how was there an apostasy?
- External persecutions and purges caused many to leave the church but that was not the primary cause.
 - The Jews persecuted the church and were destroyed.
 - Rome persecuted the church and was broken up.
- According to James Talmage and B. H. Roberts, the

most important internal causes were

Transgression and wickedness of members

1. Corruption of gospel doctrines by mixing them with philosophies of men (especially Greek).
 2. Unauthorized additions to rites of the Church and alterations in essential ordinances
 3. Unauthorized changes in Church organization
 4. Private interpretation of the scriptures
 5. Gnostic heresies.
 6. Pagan influences.
 7. Political interference.
 8. Moral and ethical corruption of leadership
- The ultimate corruption came when the church was made the state religion and everyone, including the wicked and evil, came into the church.
 - Evil people used the church to get ahead in government.
 - The church could now use government power to enforce beliefs on people. **Who's plan was that?**

Apostasy in History

- Apostasy is nothing new or rare. It is practiced to one degree or another by everyone who has come to earth – except Christ.
 - Lucifer and others apostatized in pre-mortal world.
 - Adam and Eve apostatized in Eden.
 - There has been apostasy from the true gospel throughout history, which is why history is also the story of the gospel being restored via Adam, Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Joseph Smith, and many others

Apostasy in the Future

- There will be a great apostasy at the end of the millennium:

(Revelation 20:7-10) 7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,
8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.
9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

 - Everyone in this room is guilty of apostasy.
 - The entire gospel of Christ – the new and everlasting covenant – is based on bringing people back from apostasy and being reconciled with God. It's the main purpose of the atonement.

Apostasy Now

- We are still living in the time of the great apostasy. The church was established to reverse its effects but seems to be losing the battle.
 - Apostasy among the peoples of the world is growing worse, with people outside the church straying further

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- and further from the laws of God.
- Europe, once the seat of Christianity, is often referred to as post-Christian Europe.
 - Christianity throughout the world is under attack, with people being murdered every week just because they're Christians.
 - In the US, which was founded on Judeo-Christian principles, those principles are being steadily removed from government, schools, workplaces, the media, homes, and the hearts of the people.
 - It has become politically incorrect and sometimes illegal to speak of Christian principles or read the Bible in public places.
 - Things which were once considered evil or perverse are now paraded before the people as examples of acceptable and sometimes preferred lifestyles.
 - It is getting worse, not better. New signs of societal decadence and collapse used to come about every year or so, then they became monthly. Now it is happening weekly and sometimes daily.

Apostasy Within the Church

- Sadly, apostasy is also growing within the church.
 - Addictions to drugs, pornography, and evil practices abound.
 - The worship or pursuit of money, position, prestige, cars, houses, electronics, clothing, and all the other offerings of Babylon have found place in the hearts of most members of the church, instead of seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness.(Matt 6:33)
 - As in times past, the covenant people of God continue to attend meetings, perform ceremonies, say religious words, and show outward signs of belonging to the people of God, but they ignore the words of the prophets and their hearts are in Babylon.

(Matthew 15:1-19) 1 Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,

2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

3 But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

... Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

7 Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,

8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. ...

18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

- Personal observations of hypocrisy:

- On many occasions I have been accused of rebellion against the church and God because I sometimes do things differently from other members of the church. As an example, I have been accused of heresy and rebellion for not wearing a white shirt. My accusers usually have a long list of counsels from the brethren that they do not follow. Evidently it's acceptable to ignore the brethren as long as you dress like them.
- Because I have a fallout shelter I have been accused of going overboard on the commandment to prepare. It's interesting that none of my accusers have been in compliance with the Lord's command to have a year's supply of food and other essentials.
- I have been told that my visits to the Temple weren't valid because I didn't go with a church group.

(DC 112:23-26) 23 Verily, verily, I say unto you, darkness covereth the earth, and gross darkness the minds of the people, and all flesh has become corrupt before my face.

24 Behold, vengeance cometh speedily upon the inhabitants of the earth, a day of wrath, a day of burning, a day of desolation, of weeping, of mourning, and of lamentation; and as a whirlwind it shall come upon all the face of the earth, saith the Lord.

25 And upon my house shall it begin, and from my house shall it go forth, saith the Lord;

26 First among those among you, saith the Lord, who have professed to know my name and have not known me, and have blasphemed against me in the midst of my house, saith the Lord.

Apostasy of the Gentiles Brings Their Destruction

- The apostasy of the Gentiles will bring about their destruction and the gospel will go to Israel

(3 Nephi 16:10–11) 10 And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you: At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, and of secret abominations; and if they shall do all those things, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fulness of my gospel from among them.

11 And then will I remember my covenant which I have made unto my people, O house of Israel, and I will bring my gospel unto them.

- How can we avoid apostasy in our own lives?

- Know the Gospel (Do not be deceived.)
- Avoid corruptions of Babylon (see Great Apostasy)
- Seek ye first the kingdom of God and **his** righteousness. .(Matt 6:33)