

The Great Falling Away
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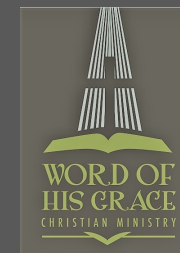
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Christian Ministry

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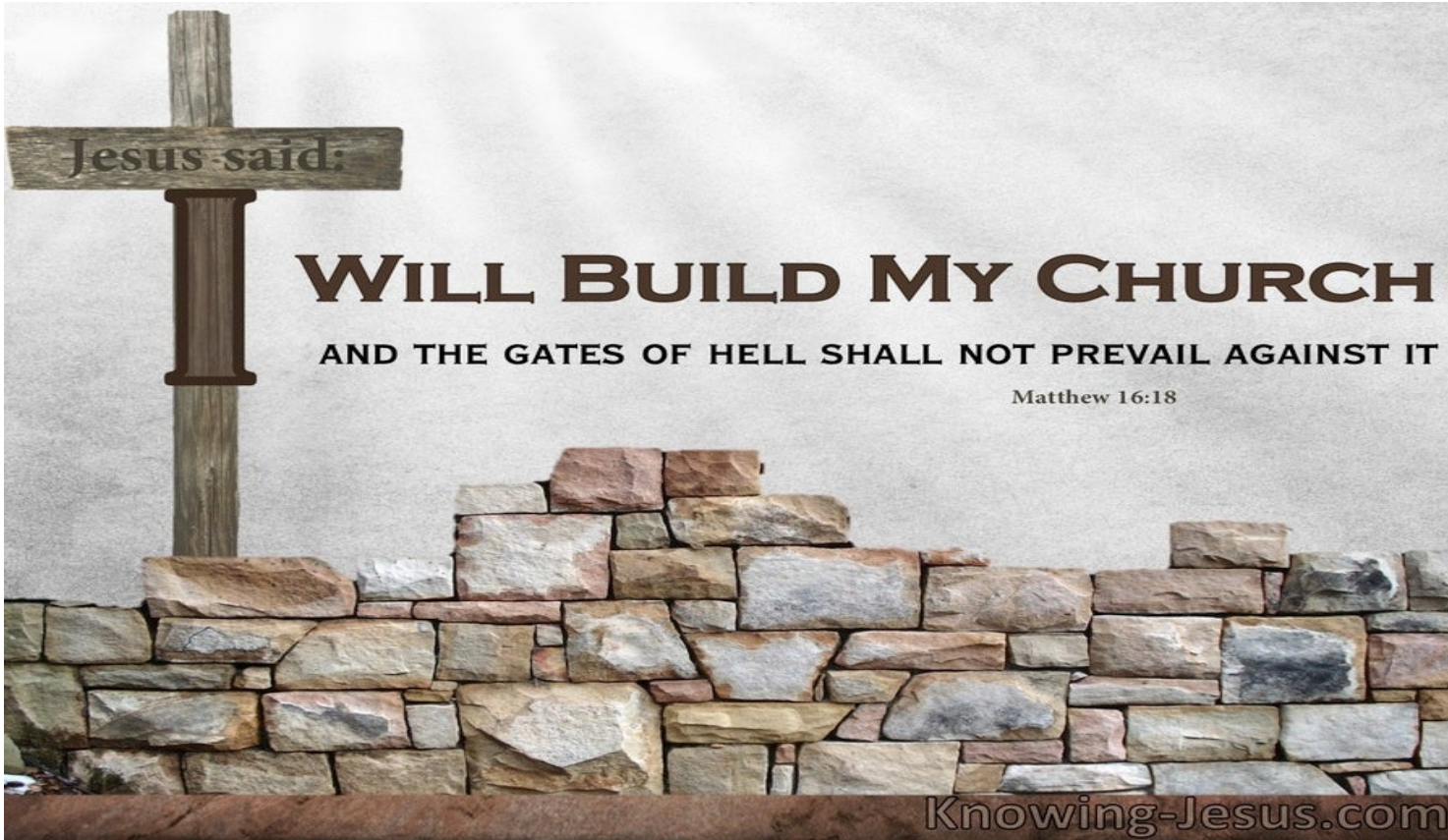
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The apostle Paul spoke of a great falling away, apostasy in the Church just before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Apostasy is described as a total departure from *the faith*. Falling away from Jesus Christ and the precious truths of Scripture is a freighting thought. Has this great falling away begun? How do we reconcile this with "*the gates of hell shall not prevail against it* [Christ's Church]"? Let us investigate and see what the Bible has to say about this serious matter.

What did Jesus say about His Church?

"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon *this rock* I will build my church; and the *gates of hell* shall not *prevail against it*" (Matthew 16:19).

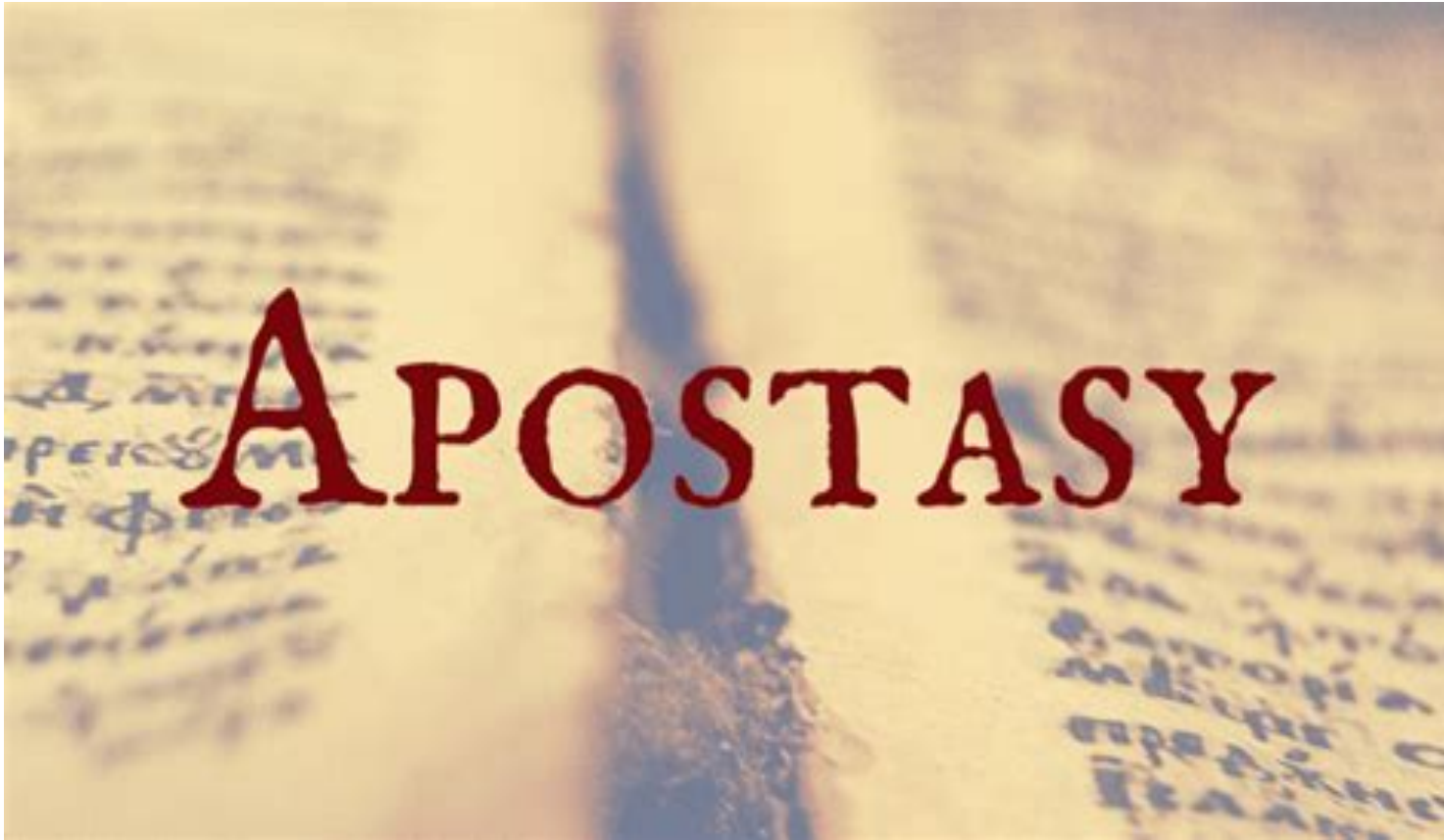
Who is the rock on which the Church is built on?

"Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion *a chief corner stone*, elect, precious: and he that believeth *on him* shall not be confounded" (1 Peter 2:6).

"And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that *Rock was Christ*" (1 Corinthians 10:4).

NOTE: Both Peter & Paul identify Jesus Christ as *the Rock* upon which the entire church rests, upon whom we place our trust in.

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What is the Church?

“To the general *assembly* and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect” (**Hebrews 12:23**).

NOTE: The New Testament Church is made up of regenerate believers who have been called out of the World. It comprises those who have placed their faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is important to know the Church is not a single denomination, assembly, or institution; but rather it is a spiritual entity of all who have placed their trust in Jesus Christ and who are led by the Holy Spirit.

What did the apostle Paul say about the coming great apostasy?

“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” (**2 Thessalonians 2:3**).

Is this the first time that Paul hinted at this coming apostasy?

No. “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the *flock*, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you *overseers*, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall *grievous wolves* enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your *own*

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Beloved, do not believe
every spirit



but
test the
spirits

1 John 4:1

to see whether
they are from God
because many false prophets
have gone out into the world.

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selves shall men arise, speaking *perverse* things, to *draw away* disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of *three years* I *ceased not to warn* every one night and day with tears.” (Acts 20:28-31).

Was Paul the only one to speak of apostasy?

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers *among you*, who privily shall bring in *damnable heresies*, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves *swift destruction*” (2 Peter 2:1).

“For *many* shall come *in my name*, saying, I am Christ; and shall *deceive many*” (Matthew 24:5). See also *verse 11*.

“Beloved, *believe not* every spirit, but *try the spirits* whether they are of *God*: because *many false prophets* are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and *exhort you* that ye should *earnestly contend for the faith* which was *once delivered unto the saints*. For there are *certain men* crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, *turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness*, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 1:3-4).

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UNDERSTANDING AND AVOIDING THE FALLING AWAY

2ND THESSALONIANS 2:1-3



So how do we explain Jesus' statement that "*the gates of hell shall not prevail against*" his Church?


"For there must be also *heresies among you*, that they which are approved may be made *manifest among you*" (1 Corinthians 11:19).

NOTE: Despite the powers of darkness, Jesus promised that His church, those who are "*born of God*" (1 John 5:4), those who "*endure unto the end*" by faith in Him (Matthew 24:13; Mark 13:13) will prevail. We must remember, "... *For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel*" (Rom. 9:6), which means not all who profess to be in Christ are in Christ.

Are there signs in the church today that show this apostasy has begun?

1. The denial of the *deity of Christ* - (Colossians 2:9).
2. The denial of the bodily *resurrection of Christ* - (Luke 24:39).
3. The denial of the *authority of Scripture* - (2 Tim. 4:3).
4. The desire to please men *rather than God* - (Gal. 1:10).

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For whatsoever is born of
God overcometh the world:
and this is the victory that
overcometh the world,
even our faith.

1 John 5:4

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5. The denial of the created order of man; *male and female* – (Mark 10:6).
6. Elevating the traditions of men above *the Word of God* – (Col. 2:8; Eph. 5:6).
7. Loving the world *more than God* – (Eph. 2:2; 1 Jn. 2:15).
8. Preaching a false gospel that *cannot save* – (2 Cor. 11:4; Eph. 2:8-9; Gal. 1:6-7).
9. The ordination of homosexuals *in the church* – (Rom. 1:25; 1 Cor. 6:9).
10. Leaders being *unfaithful to God* by compromising the truth – (Titus 1:16; 1 Jn. 1:6).

NOTE: Although many of these issues have been challenging throughout church history, it appears all these issues are rapidly declining the witness of the church at once.

If Jesus warned His church two thousand years ago, what would he say to us today?

1. Ephesus - (Revelation 2:1-7).
2. Smyrna - (Revelation 2:8-11).
3. Pergamos - (Revelation 2:12-17).
4. Thyatira - (Revelation 2:18-29).
5. Sardis - (Revelation 3:1-6).
6. Philadelphia - (Revelation 3:7-13).
7. Laodicea - (Revelation 3:14-22).

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How should Christians respond to this growing apostasy?

“But *speaking* the truth in *love*, may grow *up into him in all things*, which is the head, even Christ” (Ephesians 4:15).

“But sanctify the *Lord God in your hearts*: and be ready *always to give an answer* to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with *meekness* and fear” (1 Peter 3:15).

“Keep yourselves *in the love of God*, looking for *the mercy* of our *Lord Jesus Christ* unto eternal life” (Jude 1:21).

Where will the great apostasy lead to?

“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; 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” (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

“And *all that dwell upon the earth* shall worship him, whose names are not written in *the book of life of the Lamb* slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8).

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NOTE: The great falling away from Christ and His truth will lead the world to worship the antichrist, a worldly religious substitute who cannot save.

Why have many fallen away from Christ?

“And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in *them that perish*; because *they received not the love of the truth*, that they might be saved” (2 Thessalonians 2:10).

What will be the consequences for rejecting Christ?

“And for this cause *God shall send* them strong *delusion*, that they should *believe a lie*: That they all might be damned *who believed not the truth*, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12).

Will God keep those who trust in Him?

“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*” (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

NOTE: God will keep His people from Antichrist and his deceptive, global religious-political system.