

A black and white photograph of a dense forest. The trees are mostly bare and appear dead or dying, with many thin, vertical trunks. The ground is covered in a thick layer of fallen branches, twigs, and debris, suggesting a state of decay or a aftermath of a natural event. The overall atmosphere is somber and desolate.

The Apostasy comes first

**Even now the falling away
is increasing**

The increasing apostasy beckons

“Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold.” Matt 24:9-12

‘Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.’ 2 Thess 2:3

Apostasy is the abandonment and denial of the true religious beliefs and principles of the one true God. It is a falling away from, a withdrawal, a departure from the true Church of Jesus Christ.

The five churches of Revelation, Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, and Laodicea strayed from the accepted course or standards

of faith. They were in danger of becoming completely apostatised. These five Churches represent the churches of today that continue to compromise the word of God. They will more than likely be the centre of the great falling away in apostasy in the last days foretold of in the Scriptures before Christ returns. The falling away is even now increasing. While these five churches were in existence in the first century, they live on in us.

The Ephesian Church looked good on the outside, but inwardly they had heart trouble. This is the church that had forsaken its first love for Christ and the world. (Rev 2:4) Today it reminds us we must stand guard against losing our love for God's truth and His people.

The Church in Pergamum had also compromised their faith by allowing idolatry to creep into their congregation. The Church needed to repent. (Rev 2:16) This makes it clear

we are to resist Satan's influence to put anything before Christ, even unto to death, if necessary.

This Church of Thyatira allowed an immoral individual to lead others away from faithfulness to Christ. (Rev 2:18-29) Thyatira had a false prophetess promoting another way. (Rev 2:20) We are to resist false teaching at any cost.

The Church of Sardis was full of "nominal Christians." Full of knowledge but with no power, they were Christians in name only. (Rev 3:1-6) The Church at Sardis had fallen asleep. (Rev 3:2) The Church must always remain enthusiastic and pure in conduct anticipating the day of the Lord's return.

The Laodiceans were rich and self sufficient but their riches were worldly, not spiritual. Material comfort had put out their fire. This was the Church with the lukewarm faith. (Rev 3:14-19) The message from Laodicea is, don't become complacent and careless with God's

way of life by seeking the pleasures of the world.

There is only one word of advice for the spiritually compromised Church: “*Therefore be zealous and repent.*”(Rev3:19) These Churches show us clearly that when Satan turns up the heat, the compromised believer will melt under pressure. Repentance is the cure if we want to have life eternal in Christ.

However, when we look at the two faithful Churches we can see they are incapable of being deceived; they have proven their faith under extreme pressure of persecution. These Churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia overcame because they were prepared to die for the faith rather than be apostate and lose their love for the Lord.

Overcoming Churches have a sound foundation

The compromised Church is a building on sand, when the storm comes, the Church will fall. “*Therefore everyone who hears these*

words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.”

Matt 7:24-27

Like the five unfaithful Churches of Revelation who were threatened with the removal of their lampstands of the Holy Spirit, so compromised Churches will melt away because the Spirit will no longer be resident. *"Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent."*

Rev 2:5

The apostasy that results in the removal of the Spirit will be the evidence of God's judgement. Sand castles aren't built on Christ and His word. Faithful Churches are built on the solid rock which provides support and security when the cyclone hits.

Compromised Churches are vulnerable to spiritual decay because they have departed from the sure foundation of the word of God. Satan has provided many ways to misrepresent God and His Son. After all Satan is the great counterfeiter of all things holy.

Satan undermines the Church by misrepresenting God's word

'For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.'

2 Tim 4:3-4

Distorting God's word by taking it out of its true context to adapt it to a worldly cultural which is acceptable to man has become very popular under the deception of the devil.

'But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.'

1 Tim 4:1

Taking God's word out of its original context misrepresents God. It means we hold a different opinion other than what God has said. It means we put words into God's mouth He never said or intended to be taken the way we decide. It means we work against His purposes. It means we put ourselves on the same level as He is just as Satan did when he misrepresented God's word in the Garden of Eden. It means we lead people away from the light of God into the darkness of our own understanding.

'So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word,

then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

John 8:31-32

His word can only mean what He said in the context of the time and place He spoke and as His hearers understood Him to be speaking. Anything other than what He actually said in its context misrepresents God and we join the Pharisees in distorting the truth for a lie.

We move away from freedom in His word towards the bondage of our own making. Of the Pharisees Jesus said "*Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*"

John 8:43-44

Misquoting God is serious business because it presents God as unreliable and unfaithful. God can only be reliable and faithful according to what He actually said and meant at the time.

'But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves.' 2 Pet 2:1

Worldly people want worldly prosperity

Worldly people seek worldly pleasures, so it's natural they would desire lesser things than to walk according to the Spirit which takes discipline in letting go of the world.

Therefore worldly people are attracted to the church that promotes worldly prosperity.

The things of the world, its beauty, the possibilities, the blessing, are only of value when we understand they point to the greater

reality of God who is Spirit. (Rom1:19-21) But God calls us to be His spiritual children following the example of Christ.

There are teachers who apparently haven't understood this truth, so they point to the lesser things and assist the enemy of God to deceive, leading the sheep to the slaughter.

For when the time of God comes, many will have the mark of the beast having aligned themselves with the world where Satan rules.

To desire the things of world and neglect God is to commit a grievous error that leads to eternal death. All that is placed before God in our thinking is idolatry and comes under God's judgment.

The materially minded Church occurs when selective verses are misrepresented to pursue a worldly prosperity agenda which is not God's abundant prosperity of the spirit. Those who look to earthly things will melt under the pressure of persecution and deceptive arguments to compromise our faith.

'You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness.'

2 Pet 3:17

Many errors continue in Churches because the need for proper contextualised teaching is not understood or practiced well enough.

In this way we can promise something God never intended, or we imply something He didn't say. When what we claim in God's name doesn't happen, the uninformed person may decide God is not faithful or can be believed, and we may lead them by our error to the downfall of their faith. Instead of the word of God being the only determiner of truth, everyone demands to do what they think is best for them.

Unfaithfulness to God's word means failure

As a result of failing to live up to the whole word of God, nonexistent church discipline is now the normal way for many Churches as

people insist that each person can have their own interpretation of the word of God, besides, no one is allowed to judge another's behaviour anymore, saying "*he who is without sin should cast the first stone.*" This is just more misrepresentation.

Poor teaching means materialism has taken priority instead of living life as determined by the Spirit. The physical world has become the first concern in life, relegating the spiritual truth of self sacrifice to the background.

Instead of the kingdom of God being our first and greatest passion, the things of the world now have our full attention.

Others pursue knowledge of God and are full of doctrine, but there is little application motivated by the Holy Spirit. Having extensive knowledge of the Bible is held up as a badge of honour, but going to great pains to get information about God is not the same as suffering with Christ as we lay down our lives that others may live in Him.

We need to see the application of the truth Paul called Timothy to endure. *'This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.'*

1 Tim 1:18-19

Another failing is getting involved in strange spiritual interests because it is seen as acquiring the greater mysteries of God. The whore of Babylon is a religious harlot wanting to entice the Church to get involved in great mysteries of faith. (Rev 17:15) Being seduced by the devil's lies into prostituting our faith is far from being the spotless bride of Christ.

A reputation for being alive with a life of abundance is no substitute for having the light that offers the eternal spiritual life of Christ to the world lost in darkness.

The only sign of life that has eternal value is the sealing of the Holy Spirit which identifies those in Christ, those who do not have the Spirit do not have life. The seal of God's Spirit bears evidence in the fruitful outworking of His life in the believer.

All others without the Holy Spirit's life carry the mark of the beast who does Satan's work. This identifies them as those who are in opposition to the Lamb of God. The mark of the beast is evident in a life of disobedience and rejection of God's true word in Christ.

We are to be witness to the Lamb of God

The seeker of spiritual truth is looking for certainty, but in the worldly Church they see a system that is more divisive than the politics of the world. At least with worldly politics they know there are lies, but how can they sort the truth from the falsehood of a compromised church?

Since seekers are still influenced by the darkness of the world they will naturally be

attracted to the church that promotes their preferences for self gratification and determination.

Therefore the Church that is the closest to the world will be the most attractive. Since the world equates all success as good, the counterfeit spiritual growth of the worldly Church will increase and produce many who will take the fall into apostasy. It may also be the case that the synagogue of Satan (Rev 2:9) has a cross on its roof.

Consequently the worldly Churches will prosper and the true Church of Christ will be more marginalised and even more insignificant from a human perspective. This is the underlying reality of Revelations letters to seven churches.

From a human perspective the compromised Churches were doing just fine, and the faithful churches were suffering severe persecution.

In order to find the truth to help us remain alive we must assume that compromising the

word of God by taking it out of context is the same as drinking poison, it results in death. Every teaching that doesn't call for a life of self sacrifice will assist us in choosing a poison chalice.

Compromise produces counterfeit passion

How can we discern real honest to goodness passion for God when so many only claim to have died to self? There are so many imitations of the real passion of Christ today which are accepted, but they lack the passion for the cross. There is abundant evidence of a passion for worship without a cross.

Many people claim passion for Jesus Christ without taking up their cross to obey all He commanded. Many people say they have a passion for the Church but don't take up the cross in service to the bride of Christ. Many people have a passion for Christian doctrine but show no evidence of true knowledge in the sacrificial way of the cross.

Many nice people who do good things but never consider taking up the cross daily to obey the command of Christ by being a light in the world of darkness.

Satan is the master of the counterfeit spiritual life, encouraging the imitating of every aspect of the Christian life so we'll that most don't even realise they only have a copy of the real passion of Christ that results in eternal life.

There is a need for real discernment

How can it be that nice pleasant preachers can use the word of God out of context to justify a worldly view, and nobody notices or cares enough to challenge his imitation of the truth?

Unfortunately most don't want to rock the boat; they prefer to be known as a nice person wanting the acceptance of people rather than pay the prices of the cross to win God's acceptance. This can only occur when the mind set is on the world and the comfort it brings rather than living by faith in what is not

seen. The worldly Church walks blindfolded through a minefield of compromise.

Dear Lord where is the genuine passion to follow Christ?

What happened to the God given insight of spiritual discernment? Are so many so blind to the Spirit they don't want to live and teach the whole truth? Lord God, let us expose the clouds without water so we can begin to see revival of the Church?

Satan is delighted that the people of God go by appearances and fail to look for what is behind the scenes, because they haven't known the way to apply the word of God to all things visible. They are mostly unaware there are two powers to live by, Satan's and God's. One way gives the appearance of life today, the other eternal life for evermore.

Lord, is it possible to see the Church desire discernment so that the truth is not watered down and the real passion for the cross, the real key to the kingdom, is not lost to the

counterfeit spiritual life of the world? Dear Lord, shake the Church out of this stupor so we can all be more discerning and be real lights in the world where Satan rules.

The relevance of the message of Revelation

The messages to the seven Churches of Revelation show us that the Church of God and its members were destined to face many trials throughout the centuries before Jesus Christ would return. Yet God promised to reward His Church and individual members if they would remain faithful to Him by overcoming temptation and compromise.

His rewards are many. *"I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God."* (Rev 2:7) *"I will give you the crown of life."* (Rev 2:10) *"I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone."* (Rev 2:17) *"he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS."* (Rev 2:26) *"I will not erase his name from the book of life,*

and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." (Rev 3:5) "I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God." (Rev 3:12) "I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne." (Rev 3:21) This loving encouragement from God reminds us that serving Him is well worth the effort.

The Lord's promise to the unfaithful compromising His Church is certain if they will not repent. *"I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place." (Rev 2:5) "I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth." (Rev 2:16) "I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation." (Rev 2:23) "I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you." (Rev 3:3) "I will spit you out of My mouth." Rev 3:16*

As the seals and trumpets intensify God's judgment in the bowls, so the falling away of faith will intensify with apostasy.

The awful consequence of God's judgment awaits those who fall away into apostasy by not repenting.

What are we doing with the spiritual knowledge we have received? Are we remaining faithful to what God has revealed?

'Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.' Heb 3:12

If the Lord says that the overcomer will not have his name removed from the book of life, then it is possible the one who compromises his faith will lose his place in His book of life.

These same truths that are made clear in Revelation Chapters two and three are equally applicable to the whole Church today, since God is the same yesterday and forever.

And He is coming to set the records straight.

'Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for

them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.'

Rev 20:11-15

"I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you." Rev 3:3

Living Water Resources

Come to the River

Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen. Rev 19:11-15

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