

# The Great Apostasy

Timothy Tow

Insofar as the ten horns are concerned it is further elaborated in Revelation 17:12-13. We see the coming together of the European Union as fast fulfilling this prophecy in Revelation, which has its beginnings in Daniel 7. For further identification of the seven-headed, ten-horned beast, read Revelation 17. But who is the Mother of Harlots (Rev. 17:5), also called Mystery Babylon the Great, the great whore? She has committed fornication with the kings of the earth and made the people of the world drunk with the wine of her fornication. She held a golden cup in her hand filled with the abominations and filthiness of her fornication. What made the Seer wonder was the sight of her becoming drunk with the blood of the saints and of the martyrs of Jesus. The angel said to John, "Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns" (v 7).

In Scripture language, God's people are likened to the wife of Jehovah in the Old Testament (Isa 54:5). In the New Testament, the Church is a chaste virgin, the Bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2). In Revelation, she is called the wife of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7). Now who can the woman be, the whore with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication but the unfaithful, apostate Church? The symptoms of infidelity to Christ are seen in some of the seven churches of Asia to which Christ has an admonition through John's pen. To leave the first love as in Ephesus, to hold the doctrine of Balaam as in Pergamos, to allow that woman Jezebel to teach and seduce God's servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols as in Thyatira, shows how easily corruption enters the Church.

Let us examine our own church to detect if any of these early blemishes have surfaced and let us come together to get rid of these defects—in repentance! By the time we come to the last days before Jesus returns we see before us a thoroughly corrupt Church. All commentators

from the Reformers agree it is the Roman Church. The description of the woman can fit no other Church on earth. What chills the spine of the true Church of Jesus Christ is the vision of this Church being drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. Has not the Roman Church, in all her domain during the time of the 16th Century Reformation put to death countless thousands of true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ? The Spanish Inquisition (1215) is another chapter of her nefarious deeds. Many were burned at the stake for possessing or distributing the Bible. The short reign of Bloody Mary of England (1555–58) saw 288 Protestants burned at the stake.

The State Church of Great Britain under Mary is a daughter harlot whose mother lives in Rome. A youngest daughter of the Mother of Harlots, who more blatantly prostitutes herself to the kings of this earth, is the Ecumenical Movement organized since 1948 as the World Council of Churches (WCC). The word "Christian" is not there because her ultimate aim is to unite all religions inasmuch as the word "Ecumenical" means all of the inhabited earth. Is the Ecumenical Movement and its organization, the WCC, a chaste virgin to Christ or a harlot? The Mother of Harlots is surnamed Mystery Babylon the Great, and Babylon is Rome, as Chambers Dictionary defines: "Babylonian: Romish, popish (from the identification with Rome of the scarlet woman of Revelation 17)."

When Jerusalem became as Sodom (Rev 11:8) and Gomorrah (Isa. 1:9) did God spare her? She was completely overthrown by Nebuchadnezzar under God's righteous judgement. When the Harlot Church goes far beyond apostate Jerusalem in her wickedness, she is righteously judged through the attack upon her by the scarlet beast she rode (Rev 17:16). Political power having made use of religious power until she is not needed will cast her aside like a menstruous pad (Isa 30:22)! Righteous judgement for the Mother of Harlots! The Lord Jesus Christ is coming back real soon.

The "mystery of iniquity" is already at work (2 Thess. 2:7). "The day of Christ is at hand" (2 Thess. 2:2). What must happen before Christ returns? From 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12 we discover that the Second Coming of Christ

will be preceded by the coming of the Antichrist. The word "coming" (Greek parousia) occurs twice in these 12 verses. The first time in verse 1: "the parousia of our Lord Jesus Christ," and the second in verse 9 which talks about the parousia of the wicked one (cf. v 8). Before Christ returns, there will be a great rebellion, "a falling away first" (v 3). The words "falling away" come from the Greek apostasia (literally, "to stand away from"). It speaks of a rebellion against the Standard, the Truth, or the Law of God. It is a God-rejecting and Word-denying apostasy. Now, who are the rebels, and against whom or what are they rebelling? Jesus reveals who they are in Matthew 24:10-13, "And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." In other words, those who fall away are those who call themselves "Christian." By and large, the visible church in the last days will forsake the Faith.

These people who profess to be Christians were never regenerated in the first place. They do not have true faith. Who are they? Well they would be those who say: "I believe that Jesus Christ can bring me to heaven, but I also believe that I can get to heaven if I believe in other gods." "I believe in Jesus Christ, but he is only a man, not God." "I am a Christian, but I am also homosexual." Paul describes them in verse 10: "they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" and verse 12: "who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Apostasy begets judgement. Since unbelievers stubbornly and repeatedly choose to reject God's Truth, God gives them up to uncleanness, to vile affections, and to a reprobate mind (Rom. 1:24-28). This is judicial hardening or blinding, a God sent delusion (vv 11-12). Now understand that it is not God that sends the lie. God is not a liar and does not deceive. We understand this under the permissive will of God. Since they desire to believe in Satan's lie, and be deceived, God allows them thus to be.

The end result will be condemnation (v 12). There will be a dividing of the sheep and the goats, the wheat and the tares. Those who have not truly believed in the Lord will apostatize and be condemned. True believers will never be lost—God will keep them to the very end. Check ourselves: Are we truly saved? Have we sincerely and truthfully believed in the Lord Jesus Christ? Or are we like the lawless one? The word “lawless” occurs three times in 2 Thessalonians 2: verse 3, the man of sin or lawlessness; verse 7, the mystery of iniquity or lawlessness; and verse 8, the wicked or lawless one. First, let us deal with the person of lawlessness. He is called in verse 3 the man of sin and the son of perdition; and in verse 8 the wicked one. This same term was used in John 17:12 of Judas Iscariot who betrayed the Lord. From this we see that the man of sin is an individual or a person, not an institution, a nation, a force or an influence. He is like Judas—someone who professes Christ but in all his deeds he undermines the Lord and works against Him; i.e. he is an Apostate (with a capital A). And in verse 4, he is described as one who “opposeth” Christ. He is the Antichrist (i.e. Counter-Christ): he wants to take the place of Christ, to usurp Him as Lord and King. He possesses the Satanic ambition to be God Himself (cf. Isa. 14, Ezek. 28). In 2 Thessalonians 2:8 we are told that this particular Satanicly-inspired person will be revealed. This Antichrist will imitate the coming of Christ. He will identify himself as the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior, and deceive many. “You are looking for your coming Savior, I am he,” he will say.

The Lord’s warning in Matthew 24:4-5 applies, “Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.” How will the Antichrist capture the allegiance and adoration of the whole world? Verse 9 tells us that he will be empowered by Satan to perform deceptive miracles. Today’s Charismatic miracle workers like Benny Hinn with all their signs and wonders are preparing the world to receive this false Christ. Be careful Christian, don’t be deceived. Know the truth and love the truth that you might be saved (v 10). Know that Jesus Christ will not return until the Antichrist is revealed. But some may say, “I do not see the Antichrist to be here yet. So, I can still enjoy myself, do what

I like, since Christ's coming is nowhere near." Paul warns against presumptuousness for the Antichrist can appear at any time (vv 5-6). For although the person of lawlessness has not yet come, the principle of lawlessness is already at work (v 7). In other words, this work of opposing Christ and His Church is already going on. For instance, the Thessalonian Church was already undergoing persecutions and tribulations (2 Thess. 1:4). 1 John 2:18 informs us, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." There are many antichrists in the world today.

Satan will spare no effort to destroy or corrupt the Word of God, to hinder the Church from preaching the gospel, to attack God's servants and His saints. So, we must be ever diligent in preaching the Gospel and ever vigilant in defending the Faith. What prevents Antichrist from appearing right now is the work of the Restrainer (see 2 Thess. 2:6, 7b).

Who or what is this Restrainer? There are several views: (1) the Law of God, (2) the Archangel Michael, (3) the Holy Spirit. The popular view is that it is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is presently doing this work of convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, of judgement (John 16:8). He is not only active in the church, but also in the world in restraining evil, from letting evil run amok. Come to think of it, it is not just the Spirit, but also the Word of God, and the Lord's angels that are doing the restraining work. So, it could be a combination of these. So once the Lord withdraws His restraining hand, this sin-cursed world will take its natural course, and wickedness will reach its height with the wicked one leading the way. Know that there will be two comings: (1) the coming of the Antichrist, and (2) the coming of Christ. Antichrist will first come before Christ returns. And when Christ returns, He will destroy the Antichrist and his armies by "the spirit of his mouth," and "brightness of his coming" (v 8).

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[Timothy Tow - who was he? "Timothy Tow Siang Hui (28 December 1920 – 20 April 2009) was a Singaporean pastor who founded the Bible-Presbyterian Church. He was also founding principal of the Far Eastern Bible College. -- From Wikipedia]