

The Church in Prophecy

End time revival or apostasy?



By [Dr. David R. Reagan](#)

There is much talk going around these days about how unified, triumphant and glorious the Church will be in the end times right before the return of Jesus. This pollyanna image of the Church is certainly attractive, but it does not correspond with what the Bible prophesies.

Apostasy

The picture of the Church in the end times that is portrayed in the Bible is not a very pretty one. For one thing, the Bible prophesies that the Church will be racked by apostasy. Jesus prophesied that "many will fall away" ([Matt. 24:10](#)). Likewise, Paul said the Anti-Christ cannot be revealed until "the great apostasy" takes place ([II Thess. 2:3](#)).

Paul reveals the source of the apostasy in [II Timothy 3:5](#) — "Men will hold to form of religion but will deny its power." The fulfillment of this prophecy began in the 1920's with the ascendancy of the German School of Higher Criticism. This school of thought, which quickly swept American seminaries, advocated that the Bible should be approached like any other piece of literature — with a critical eye. The concepts of the special inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible were rejected. The Bible came to be viewed as Man's search for God rather than God's revelation to Man. As a human product, it was considered to be full of myth, legend, and superstition.

This assault on the integrity of God's Word opened the floodgates of apostasy. Before long Christian theologians and ministers were laughing about the virgin birth of Jesus, discounting His miracles, casting doubt on His resurrection, and flatly denying His second coming.

As the uniqueness of Jesus was downplayed, many denominations began to embrace the damnable doctrine of Universalism. And that is where we are today, caught up in the midst of a gross apostasy which says, "Believe what you want. The important thing is to be sincere. There are many roads to God." All of which makes a liar of Jesus who said: "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the

Father except through Me" ([John 14:16](#)). The result is that there are a lot of sincere people who are sincerely going to Hell.

Cultism

A second set of prophecies warn that the Church will be assaulted by cultic deception in the end times. Jesus emphasized this point repeatedly in His Olivet Discourse ([Matt. 24:5](#), [11](#) & [24](#)). And Paul underlined it in the strongest possible language when he wrote: "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](#)).

The fulfillment of these prophecies began in the 19th Century with the rise of Mormonism and its demonic teaching that Jesus is the brother of Lucifer, one of thousands of Gods created by the super god, Adam, an exalted man. The Jehovah's Witnesses were next on the scene with their perverted teaching that Jesus is the Archangel Michael.

This century has witnessed the rapid multiplication of the cults, just as prophesied. Today, life-long Christians who do not know why they believe what they profess to believe are being sucked into the cults by the tens of thousands.

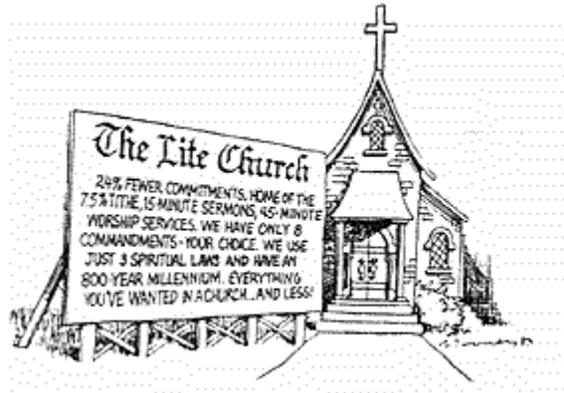
Equally appalling is the direct penetration of the Church by cultic doctrine. Well known Christian leaders are advocating the ancient Shamanistic practice of visualization as the key to prayer. Others are teaching one of Satan's oldest lies — that those who have been born again are "little gods."

The latest cultic fad is the concept of Satanic salvation; namely, that we do not owe our salvation to the blood Jesus shed on the Cross but rather to some imaginary torment which He suffered at the hands of Satan for three days in Hell. And then, of course, there is Masonry, the oldest form of cultic penetration of the Church, with its secret blood oaths, its works salvation, and its Universalism.

The degree of cultic penetration into the Church is perhaps best illustrated by two recent events.

Not long ago the number one rated "Christian" televangelist in America served as the main speaker for the dedication of the new international headquarters of the Unity Church. The Unity Church is a classic cult that teaches reincarnation and denigrates the uniqueness of Jesus by advocating that the Christ potential resides in each of us. That same televangelist continues to hold church growth seminars for the Unity Church.

Meanwhile, one of the leading Charismatic spokesmen in America has called for Christians to embrace the Mormons!



Confusion

A third group of prophecies indicate that in the end times the Church will be assailed by doctrinal error. These are doctrines that do not damn the soul but which confuse and weaken the spirit.

In [II Timothy 4:3-4](#), Paul says: "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." There are many popular myths in Christendom today that either rob people of the power of their faith or else deceive them into practicing a presumptuous faith.

Among Fundamentalists there is a myth that God retired in the First Century and that with Him went all manifestations of the supernatural, including angels, demons, spiritual gifts, and miracles. Among Charismatics the doctrinal abuses have been epidemic, including the following myths:

1. Faith is to be placed in your faith and not in God.
2. It is always God's will to heal.
3. The believer has the authority of Jesus.
4. It is God's desire that believers be financially prosperous.
5. Believers can have what they want through positive confession.

The winds of doctrine ([Eph. 4:14](#)) are blowing through the Church at gale force and believers are being tossed here and there by the waves, all in the fulfillment of prophecy.

Worldliness

A fourth characteristic prophesied about the Church in the end times is that it will be compromised and corrupted by worldliness. The prophetic picture of this worldly church is found in [Revelation 3:14-22](#), where the church at Laodicea is described.

The seven churches depicted in Revelation 2 and 3 are symbolic of seven periods of church history. The church at Laodicea, the last to be presented, is representative of the type of church that will prevail in Christendom at the end of the Church Age.

The picture is a pathetic one. The Church is apathetic, neither hot nor cold. The apathy is a product of the Church's adoption of a worldly attitude expressed in the words, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing." Jesus responds with a scathing rebuke: "You do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked."

In fulfillment of this prophecy, our churches today are filled with cultural Christians who have accepted Jesus as Savior but not as Lord. They are schizophrenic Christians who walk with one foot in the Church and the other in the world. They are carnal Christians who shout "Hallelujah!" on the weekend but who live like pagans during the week. They are greedy Christians in pursuit of health, wealth, and power. The Cross and its message of sacrifice is as offensive to them as it is to the world.

Judgment

Because of the apostasy, heresy, cultism, and worldliness that the Bible says will characterize the end time Church, the Bible prophesies that the Church will come under judgment. In [Revelation 3:19](#) Jesus says to the church at Laodicea, "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline."

The glitzy, overindulgent church of the 70's and 80's is now tasting the judgment of God. Sin is being exposed. Religious empires are being dismantled. The Lord is calling us from the Cadillac to the Cross. Through discipline, the Spirit is motivating us to humility, righteousness and holiness.

Judgment has begun in the House of the Lord, where it always begins ([Ezek. 9:6](#) and [I Peter 4:17](#)). The Lord is disciplining His Church as a prelude to the pouring out of His wrath upon the world.

The Latter Rain

Is there any good news about the Church in prophecy? Yes, there is. The incredibly good news is that the Bible prophesies a great pouring out of God's Spirit in the end times to empower those who are receptive to stand against the onslaught of Satan.

The prophecy is found in [Joel 2:28-30](#). Because this prophecy was quoted by Peter in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost to explain the phenomenon of tongues ([Acts 2:14-21](#)), many have assumed that it was fulfilled on that day. That assumption is erroneous.

The context before the passage (verses 18-27) makes it clear that there will be two outpourings of the Spirit (the "early and latter rain") and that the final outpouring will occur after the Jews are regathered to their land and re-established as a nation. Also, the context after the passage (verses 31 & 32) indicates clearly that the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy will occur at the time of the Second Coming.

We have been in the period of the "latter rain" ever since the re-establishment of the state of Israel on May 14, 1948. The Spirit is being poured out, and the gifts of the spirit are being manifest in a way unparalleled since the First Century. The praise and worship of the Tabernacle of David are also being restored to the Church to further empower it for spiritual warfare.

This great anointing of the Spirit is producing a remnant that is immersed in the Word, committed to righteousness, crucified to self, dedicate to prayer, surrendered in worship, zealous for evangelism and yearning for the soon return of Jesus. It is this remnant that will usher in the Lord's return on a cloud of praise.

A Modern Day Prophecy Concerning the Church

Printed below is an excerpt from a prophecy given by the late Stanley Frodsham, former editor of the Pentecostal Evangel. The prophecy was delivered at the Elim Bible Institute Summer Camp Meeting in 1965.

"When I visit My people in mighty revival power, it is to prepare them for the darkness ahead... Take heed to yourselves lest you be puffed up and think that you have arrived. Many shall be puffed up as in the olden days..."

"Listen to the messengers, but do not hold men's persons in admiration. For many whom I shall anoint mightily, with signs and miracles, shall become lifted up and shall fall by the wayside. I do not do this willingly; I have made provision that they might stand. I call many into this ministry and equip them; but remember that many

shall fall. They shall be like bright lights, and people shall delight in them. But they shall be taken over by deceiving spirits and shall lead many of My people away."

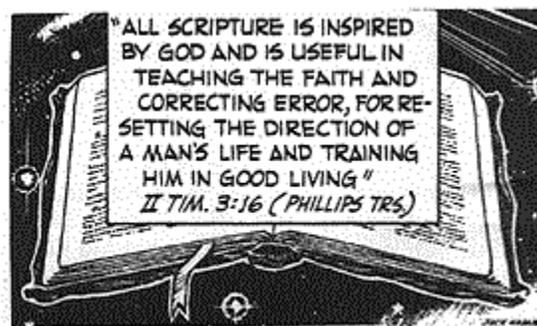
"Hearken diligently concerning these things, for in the last days shall come seducing spirits that shall turn many of My anointed ones away. Many shall fall through divers lusts and because of sin abounding..."

"I warn you to search the Scriptures diligently concerning these last days, for the things that are written shall indeed be made manifest. There shall come deceivers among My people in increasing numbers who shall speak for the truth and shall gain the favor of the people. For the people shall examine the Scriptures and say, 'What these men say is true.' Then when they have gained the hearts of the people, then and then only shall they bring out these wrong doctrines. Therefore, I say that you should not give your hearts to men, nor hold people's persons in admiration. For by these very persons shall Satan enter into My people. Watch for seducers!"

"Be not deceived, for the deceiver will first work to gain the hearts of many, and then he shall bring forth his insidious doctrines. You cannot discern those that are of Me and those that are not of Me when they start to preach. But seek Me constantly, and then when these doctrines are brought out you shall have a witness in your heart that these are not of Me."

"The minister of righteousness shall be on this wise: his life shall agree with the word and his lips shall give forth that which is wholly true, and it will be no mixture. When the mixture appears, then you will know he is not a minister of righteousness. The deceivers speak first the truth and then error to cover their own sins which they love..."

"I desire you to be firmly established in My Word and not in the personalities of men that you will not be moved as so many shall be moved... Diligently inquire of Me when you hear something that you have not seen in the Word, and do not hold people's persons in admiration, for it is by this very method that Satan will destroy many of My people."



An interesting thing about this prophecy is that it was published in Jimmy Swaggart's magazine, *The Evangelist*, in October 1987. Later on, the problems encountered in his life and ministry were to serve as a partial fulfillment of the prophecy.

The message is clear. We must all be on guard spiritually. None of us is immune to deception. Everything must be tested by the Word. If a doctrine fails the test of Scripture, it is to be rejected, regardless of who is teaching it. Our trust is to be placed in the Word and not in men.

We must stop chasing after men and miracles. A fixation on either will result in deception. False teachers can appear as angels of light. Miracles can be performed by the power of Satan. Our eyes are to be fixed on Jesus, and Him only. Our authority in all things is to be His Word.