

The apostate church in the last days must become so corrupted that it actually opposes what Christ taught while at the same time insisting that it is faithful to Him. Satan's lie must be honored as God's truth without the church leaders who deceive and those who are deceived even knowing that such a metamorphosis has occurred. Moreover, that perversion must have taken place from within the "last days" church itself even before the Antichrist appears.

Could Paul have meant anything less when he warned, "Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come except there come a falling away [apostasy, turning from the faith] first, and [then] that man of sin [the Antichrist] be revealed, the son of perdition" (2 Thessalonians 2:3)? While the apostasy no doubt is related to a simultaneous general moral decay in society affecting every arena of life from the family to education, business, and politics, the primary meaning is a departure from the truth of God's Word. Sound doctrine will be despised (2 Timothy 4:1-4). For many people objective truth will have been replaced by feelings and experience. For others, intellectualism and skepticism will have justified what seems to be a very reasonable new faith.

Jesus Himself, who raised the question as to whether there would be any faith whatsoever on the earth when He returned (Luke 18:8), used language similar to Paul's. When His disciples asked Him what would characterize the last days just prior to His return, He explained that it would be a time of the greatest religious deception the world had seen to that point, or would ever see again. He prefaced His remarks with this solemn warning: "Take heed that no man deceive you" (Matthew 24:4; cf. 24:5, 11, 24).

Those who heed such warnings will not succumb to the spirit of the last days. Like God, who weeps over a rebellious world and delays His judgment to give men time to repent, they will have a passion to bring His truth to the world. Everyone who loves God more than this world and to whom His evaluation of one's life means more than the fickle opinions of men will be kept from the delusion that will sweep the world. Those who fear God and keep His Word have no fear of what others may think or say or do to them. (*Global Peace and the Rise of Antichrist: Hunt, Dave*)